(U) CTS Horizon Report
27 July 2018

(U//FOUO) Note: The Counterterrorism Section ("CTS") Horizon Report is an open source U//FOUO daily intelligence publication tailored specifically to the needs of its principal reader. The brief is based on preliminary reporting, some of which has been derived from media outlets. Reporting of this nature is often inaccurate and subject to change as the situation continues to unfold. The principal will be made aware of any known threats to Chicago, on a need to know and right to know basis.

(U//FOUO) Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

(U//FOUO) CTS has no information to indicate that a specific, credible threat exists to Chicago, at this time, but based on the current threat environment CPIC/CTS will continue to monitor emerging intelligence.

(U//FOUO) Current Threat Environment

(U//FOUO) Foreign terrorist organizations—such as al-Qa'ida, the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, and their affiliates remain intent on attacking Western targets and continue to call on individuals to conduct independent attacks in the United States using a variety of weapons and tactics including arson, vehicle ramming, edged weapons, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and the use of small arms. Recent plots and attacks demonstrate the continued and growing interest by foreign terrorist organizations and other violent extremists in targeting mass gathering events. To date, these attacks have focused primarily on soft targets, such as tourist destinations, sporting events, music venues, shopping districts, and mass-transportation systems.

(U//FOUO) US-based HVEs—possibly encouraged by violent extremist messaging encouraging further attacks, media attention, and perceived success of recent incidents—may also be inspired to act during the holidays and opportunities such as a convention to access large crowds. HVEs and small groups of individuals are of particular concern due to their ability to remain undetected until operational, their willingness to attack civilians and soft targets, and their ability to inflict significant casualties with weapons that do not require specialized knowledge, access, or training.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

(U//FOUO) Local Suspicious Activity Reporting (SARs)

(U//FOUO) NSTR

(U) CT Watch Overnight News

CONUS

1. Obama administration gave US aid money to Al Qaeda affiliate in Sudan [i24 News – ISR – embedded video]

- The Obama administration gave taxpayer money to an Al Qaeda affiliate in Sudan — with most of the funds transferred after officials became aware of the mistake, a joint i24NEWS-Middle East Forum investigation reveals.

- The US Agency for International Development (USAID) gave $200,000 to the Khartoum-based Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA), a designated global terror entity placed on the US sanctions list over its financial support for Osama Bin Laden and other terrorist groups including Hamas.

- Independent sources have confirmed to i24NEWS that the funds were stopped as soon as it became clear that ISRA was a proscribed group

- — but that the US Treasury nonetheless issued a special license permitting a one-time $125,000 transfer to ISRA once the mistake was known.

2. Improved DNA technique used to identify man killed in Sept. 11 terror attacks [CNN – embedded video]

- The remains of a man killed during the Sept. 11 terror attack in New York have been identified 17 years later.

- The New York medical examiners' office on Wednesday identified the victim as Scott Michael Johnson, 26, who worked at an investment banking company at the World Trade Center.

- Johnson is the 1,642 person to be officially identified in the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks that left nearly 3,000 people dead.

- He was identified after his DNA was re-tested using a new and improved technique, Chief Medical Examiner Barbara Sampson said in a statement.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

3. America's Counterterrorism Gamble [Center for Strategic and International Studies – USA – embedded graphics and maps]

- U.S. national security is shifting from a focus on countering terrorist groups to competing with state adversaries.

- While it is reasonable to focus more attention on adversaries like Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China, terrorist groups like the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah still present a threat to the United States.

- Indeed, state and non-state adversaries frequently overlap, since countries like Iran use terrorist groups like Hezbollah to pursue their interests.

- It would be unnecessarily risky for the United States to move too quickly away from countering terrorists while the threat is still high, allowing groups and networks to resurge.

- Analyst comment: Includes sub-sections "Global Terrorism; Islamic Extremists; Threat to the United States; Threat to Europe; State-Sponsored Terrorism; A Persistent Threat.

- *Seth G. Jones . . . is director of the Transnational Threats Project, and is a senior adviser to the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

OCONUS

1. [UK] Home Office suspends cooperation with US over two Isis 'Beatles' who could face death penalty [Independent – UK]

- The Home Office has temporarily suspended cooperation with US authorities over the case involving two British-raised jihadis who could face the death penalty.

- Sajid Javid has been forced into the concession after he made the decision to waive Britain's usual position of demanding assurances that the death penalty would not be applied.

- In a letter to Jeff Sessions, the US attorney general, Mr Javid insisted that the case does not impact on the UK's opposition to the death penalty, but did not seek the normal assurances that it would not be used.

- The decision was taken by Mr Javid and Boris Johnson, the then foreign secretary, and was approved by [Prime Minister] Theresa May.

- However, after Mr Javid was put on notice that Elsheikh was intending to apply for a judicial review to quash the decision, he temporarily suspended cooperation with US authorities.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

2. Israel freed Turkish detainee at Trump's request, official says [Reuters via Washington Post – cross ref next article]

- Israel freed an alleged Turkish militant following a request from U.S. President Donald Trump, an Israeli official said . . . the deal was part of a failed White House bid to get Ankara to release an American detainee.

- Israel deported Ebru Ozkan on July 15, a week after indicting her for ties to the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas - charges her lawyer denied.

- She had been arrested by Israel while on a tourist visa in June. Her case angered Turkey.

- The Washington Post reported . . . that Trump asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a July 14 phone call to let Ozkan go in a "trade" for Andrew Brunson, a U.S. pastor who has spent 21 months in Turkish detention.

- "I can confirm that there was such a request by President Trump," an Israeli official said on condition of anonymity.

- From Reuters 0510 EST: Reports that a Turkish detainee in Israel was released as a result of a deal with the United States in return for the release of U.S. pastor Andrew Brunson in Turkey are "completely baseless", a senior Turkish official said on Friday. **Reports of deal between U.S., Turkey over Israel detainee release 'baseless': Turkish official**

3. Trump Sanctions Threat Blasted by Turkey as Ties Hit New Low [MSN via Bloomberg – embedded photo – cross ref prior article]

- U.S. President Donald Trump said he'll impose "large sanctions" on Turkey over the detention of an American pastor, plunging relations between the two NATO allies to a new low and extending a rout on Turkish financial markets.

- The episode is the latest in a series of crises between the longtime allies.

- The U.S. has slammed Turkey's plans to buy a missile defense system from Russia, an issue that's already raised the threat of American sanctions.

- The countries have also clashed over the war in Syria, where Turkey has increasingly acted in concert with Russia and Iran.

- President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blames the U.S. for backing Kurdish militants in Syria, and harboring the alleged mastermind behind the coup attempt against his government.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

4. Knife attack kills one Israeli, wounds two others in West Bank [i24 – ISR]

- A knife attack by a Palestinian in a West Bank settlement [Adam] on Thursday killed one Israeli and wounded two others, while the assailant was shot dead, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed.

- Palestinian media named the assailant as Ahmad Tareq Yosef Abu Ayoush, [age 17] . . .The Israeli army did not confirm the boy's identity but said he was from the village of Kuber and left a message on social media before the attack.

- Update from Arutz Sheva – ISR: 4 arrested in Arab village of Kobar following deadly stabbing attack by resident of village. Rioters throw firebombs at IDF forces. **IDF questions terrorist's family**

- From Haaretz – ISR: With Gaza border protests growing more militant, Palestinian factions in the Strip called on Thursday for mass participation and acts of "popular resistance" in marches at the border on Friday. **Israel Braces for Renewed Gaza Border Protests as Hamas Threatens to Avenge Fighters Killed by IDF**

5. Georgian Citizen Killed in Syria [Civil Society – Rep. of Georgia]

- The Radio Way, a community radio station based in Georgia's north-eastern Pankisi gorge, reported yesterday that a Georgian citizen Tamaz Batirashvili was killed in Syria.

- 38-year-old Batirashvili, native of village Birkiani in Pankisi gorge, who had reportedly left for Syria in 2013, died in a clash on July 24, according to the radio station.

- Tamaz Batirahsvili was the brother of Tarkhan Batirashvili, otherwise known as Omar al-Shishani, one of the military commanders of the Islamic State group, who was killed in 2016.

- At least 27 natives of Pankisi gorge have died fighting in Syria since 2012.

- According to the Georgian State Security Service, as of December 2017, there were up to 30 Georgian citizens fighting for extremist groups in Syria and Iraq . . . .

6. Yemen's rebels attack Abu Dhabi airport using a drone [Al Jazeera]

- Yemen's Houthi rebels say they attacked Abu Dhabi's international airport in the United Arab Emirates with a drone.

- According to the Houthi-run Al-Masirah television channel, the Sammad-3 drone launched three attacks on the airport on Thursday. It was not immediately clear if there was any damage or casualties.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- Abu Dhabi airport tweeted earlier in the day there had been an incident involving a supply vehicle that had not affected operations.

- An identified UAE official told Reuters news agency the attack did not occur. Despite the denial, people on social media noted many flights at the airport had been delayed.

- From Bloomberg: The Houthis on July 18 said they had attacked a Saudi Aramco refinery in Riyadh using a Sammad 2 drone. **Yemen Rebels Say They Attacked Abu Dhabi Airport With Drones**

7. One person killed, another injured in air strike in Ubari [Libya] [Libya Observer – LBY]

- A person was killed and another injured in an air strike carried out by an unidentified aircraft Wednesday evening, in the oasis town of Ubari, south-west of Libya, according to local sources from Ubari.

- The sources added that an air strike targeted a house in the Sharib neighbourhood of the town, without identifying the dead person, the injured or who was responsible . . . .

- A security source clarified that the house was hit after the arrival of a Hyundai Santa Fe in front of the house, where it was targeted immediately by at least two missiles

- . . . the scenario is very similar to the raid carried out by The United States Africa Command - Africom - aircraft in Ubari on March 24, which resulted in the killing of two people.

8. [UK] Man charged with four counts of disseminating terrorist publications [Metropolitan Police – UK]

- A man has appeared at court charged with terrorism offences following an investigation by the Met's Counter Terrorism Command.

- Mohammed Ahad, 37 (23.06.81), was charged on Tuesday, 10 July with four counts of dissemination of terrorist publications, contrary to section 2 of the Terrorism Act (TACT), 2006.

- He was also charged with one count of possession of information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism, contrary to section 58 TACT, 2000.

- He was subsequently bailed to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court today, Thursday, 26 July, where he was further bailed to appear at the Old Bailey for a preliminary hearing on Friday, 3 August.

9. Dutch State not accountable for 1977 train hijackers' deaths, court rules [Netherlands Times]

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- The Dutch State is not accountable for the death of two hijackers in the liberation of a hijacked train at De Punt in 1977, the court in The Hague ruled on Wednesday.

- There are no indications that the soldiers shot the hijackers without necessity, it was not proven that the government gave them a secret order to kill the hijackers, and the instructions given to the soldiers . . . . were lawful.

- Papilaja and Uktolseja were part of a group of nine armed Moluccans who hijacked the train from Assen to Groningen at the Drenthe town of De Punt on 23 May 1977.

10. German authorities arrest former "Islamic State" wife [Deutsche Welle – DEU/GER]

- Authorities in the German town of Karlsruhe on Thursday detained a 31-year-old woman [Sabine S.] who had recently returned from working on behalf of the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) group in Syria.

- An initial warrant for her arrest was denied earlier this year after a judge had ruled that simply living in the IS-controlled territory was not enough to justify her arrest.

- . . . Sabine S. had traveled from Germany to Syria in late 2013, where she went on to marry and have two children with an IS soldier. The man was killed in December 2013, although she is believed to have married again . . . .

- The woman was tasked with promoting life in the jihadi caliphate on an online blog monitored by the jihadi group.

- Sabine S. is the second German woman to be prosecuted for actively working on behalf of IS in Syria. Last month, police arrested 27-year-old Jennifer W., [who] work[ed] as a policewoman . . . .

11. Slovenia foreign fighter expelled [from Italy] [ANSA – ITA]

- Italy on Wednesday expelled a 28-year-old Slovenian foreign fighter for "imperative reasons of national security".

- The man is suspected of enrolling people for international terrorism and of leaving for Syria to fight for ISIS in 2014, government sources said.

- Some 307 people have now been expelled from Italy since 2015, 70 of them this year.

12. Turkey arrests German national for spreading 'terrorist propaganda' [Hurriyet Daily News – TUR – embedded photo]

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- A German national was arrested in Turkey's southern province of Hatay for "spreading terrorist propaganda on social media," Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency reported on July 25.

- Dennis E., a German citizen of Turkish origin, was detained by anti-terror police in Hatay's Arsuz district for allegedly making propaganda in favor of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on his social media accounts.

- He was arrested by the court following an interrogation by the public prosecutor in the district of İskenderun, state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

13. 'Amaq Gives Casualty Count of 435+ in IS Attacks on Multiple Axes in al-Suwayda [Syria] [SITE Intelligence Group]

- The Islamic State's (IS) 'Amaq News Agency gave a total casualty count of over 435 from Syrian regime forces and militiamen in attacks on multiple axes in Suwayda governorate.

- It published an article on July 25, 2018, reporting that nine IS fighters carried out a suicide raid on military positions and security headquarters in Suwayda, where four detonated their explosive vests and the remainder were killed during clashes . . . .

- It stated that over 235 enemy forces were killed and nearly 200 others were wounded.

- Also from SITE: The Islamic State (IS) released the first video from its "Hauran" division for "Sham Province," showing footage of suicide bombings and clashes that ultimately led to the conquest of Heet, a village in Syria's Daraa governorate. **IS Releases First Video from its Hauran Division, Shows Footage of Conquest of Heet Village [Syria]**

14. At least 40 killed in Yemen clashes [Anadolu Agency – TUR]

- Clashes between Yemeni government forces and Houthi rebels have left at least 40 dead, the [Yemeni] military said Thursday.

- The clashes erupted in Al-Malajim district of Al-Bayda town when government troops supported by Saudi-led coalition forces launched an operation to free the district from Houthi rebels . . . Fifteen soldiers and 25 Houthis were killed.

- The statement noted that government forces made progress in the operation and were able to advance 18 kilometers (11 miles) to Affar, a strategic point on the Houthi's supply route.

15. Iraq Wants to Send Home Wives and Children of Moroccan ISIS Fighters [Morocco World News]

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- Moroccan newspaper Akhbar Al Yaoum reported on July 26 that the Iraqi government decided to send home the wives and children of Moroccan ISIS fighters after the terrorist group was eradicated from the country at the end of 2017.

- The extradition operation is set to be carried out in coordination with the United Nations and will concern the fighters' wives and children under the age of 15.

- It will not, however include female ISIS fighters.

- From The Local – Spain: Some 600 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa reached Spain Thursday after storming a double barrier between Morocco and the Spanish territory of Ceuta, with some attacking security forces with quicklime, police said. **Violence at Ceuta fence as 600 migrants storm border**

16. Afghan Taliban Claims Suicide Bombings in Kabul and Wardak on Intelligence Unit Commandos as "Retribution" [SITE Intelligence Group]

- The Afghan Taliban claimed suicide bombings in the capital, Kabul, and in Wardak province on Afghan intelligence unit commandos as "retribution" for alleged crimes.

- In a . . . July 26, 2018 [communique], group spokesman Zabihullah [said] the two operations hit the "Zero One" Special Forces Battalion, which he charged [were] . . . committing "crimes and massacres" in Logar and Maidan Wardak provinces . . . .

- Both operations were executed with vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED), killing and wounding dozens in both instances.

17. J&K: 1 terrorist killed in encounter with security forces in Kupwara [WIO News – IND]

- A terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

- The encounter was carried out in J&K's Handwara.

- The gun battle between the security forces and the terrorists is still underway.

18. [Belgian] Security services to check bus and rail passengers' details [Flanders News – BEL]

- It was after the Brussels attacks that the Belgian government decided that the security services should gain access to passenger lists including passport numbers and credit card details.

- Initially the measure was only rolled out for air passengers, but now two pilot projects herald the start of information exchange of bus and rail passenger details.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- Eurostar and Flixbus are the first two operators to co-operate.

19. Switzerland struggling to bring Swiss IS fighters in Syria before its courts [The Local – Switzerland]

- The office of Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber has laid charges against the four Swiss citizens, who allegedly travelled to Syria to join IS forces.

- One case concerns Selina S (not real name) and her young child, who have been in a Kurdish internment camp in northeast Syria since January 2018.

- The problem is how to bring the Swiss citizens back to their domestic justice system. Switzerland does not offer consular services in Syria . . .

- . . . the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs advises against all travel to Syria – and therefore does not offer consular support to any of its citizens . . . [there].

20. Clashes rock Timbuktu as Malian election looms [Reuters]

- Clashes broke out in Mali's northern city of Timbuktu on Thursday between the Arab, Tuareg and black communities, days before elections seen as a test of the country's security situation, the local governor said.

- President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita will seek a second term in office on Sunday amid rising discontent over the government's record on security, especially in the desert center and north where Islamist groups operate.

- Armed protesters from Mali's Arab community burned tyres and torched vehicles in Timbuktu on Wednesday, protesting against worsening insecurity and alleged ill treatment by security forces.

- On Thursday, about 100 people took to the streets and clashes ensued between the city's light-skinned Arab and Tuaregs and the black community.

- See also News24 – RSA via AFP: **Mali holds key polls overshadowed by jihadist violence**

21. One in five Malaysian undergrads feel terrorism an effective tool for achieving objectives, says survey [The Star – MLY]

- One-fifth of Malaysian university students or 21% of them feel that terrorism is an effective strategy to achieve an objective, a survey has found.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

- There were similar figures found among Indonesian, Filipino, Singaporean and Thai students surveyed – with 24.24%, 23.78%, 30.95% and 31.81% respectively agreeing that terrorism was effective to achieve their objectives.

- The survey findings were published in a 274-page paper titled "Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia" by the South-East Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism that comes under the Foreign Ministry.

- "This could possibly be attributed to the rhetoric and propaganda pushed by groups like Daesh (Islamic State).

22. Autonomy Could Strip Foreign Fighters of Southern Philippine Sanctuaries: MILF Chief [Benar News – MLY]

- A final peace deal expected to be signed into law soon by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte could help stop foreign militants from infiltrating the troubled south, the leader of the country's biggest Muslim rebel force said.

- Murad Ebrahim, chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), expressed confidence that foreign fighters, including Malaysians and Indonesians, could soon be forced out of their sanctuaries as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) comes into force.

- "The moment these small groups will no longer accept these foreign elements, they can no longer come [to fight]," he said.

- Murad was referring to the extremist Abu Sayyaf Group and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

- Factions of the two southern groups have pledged allegiance to the extremist group Islamic State (IS) and engaged the military in sporadic clashes in recent weeks.

(U//FOUO) This document is tracked by HSEC Codes: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.8, 8.9, and 8.10.

It should be noted that elements of this document may be subject to 28 CFR Part 23. The Chicago Police Department Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights. The CPIC privacy policy was established to safeguard these rights. Any further disclosure or dissemination of this document or the information contained herein is strictly prohibited without the approval of the CPIC. This document and the information contained herein shall not be released to the media or the general public. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
Crime Prevention and Information Center

Counterterrorism Section
Daily Awareness and Homeland Security Brief

27 July 2018

TLO Area North Meeting
25th District, 5555 W. Grand
August 28, at 1700-1900hrs

On This Date

2011, Afghanistan: Attacker kills Kandahar mayor with bomb concealed in turban; Taliban claim responsibility.

2008, Turkey: Bombs kill 17 and wound more than 150 in Istanbul; Kongra-Gel denies involvement.

2001, Spain: Bomb outside Barcelona bank wounds three GRAPO suspected.

Special Events

Fiesta del Sol
1000-1600 W. Cermak @ 1100-2300hrs

Wicker Park Fest
Milwaukee Ave. between Ashland & North Ave. @ 1700-2200hrs

Lincoln Square Greek fest
2727 W. Winona @ 1700-2300hrs

Summer Wine Fest
Lincoln Park Zoo @ 1800-2100hrs

Chicago Summer Dance
Grant Park Garden @ 1800-2130hrs

Toronto vs. White Sox
Guaranteed Rate Field @ 1910hrs

Public Gatherings

015th District
Saturday, 28 July 2018, 0830-1130 Hours, Parade, 4941 W. Chicago Avenue. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "Say No to Drugs & Violence Parade."

003rd District
Saturday, 28 July 2018, 0900-1700 Hours, Assembly, 6300 S. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "Israel United in Christ."

018th District
Saturday, 28 July 2018, 1130-1600 Hours, Assembly, 800 N. Michigan Avenue-Water Tower. This group will assemble regarding their campaign "Sex Workers Rights, Rape Culture, and Law Enforcement."

010th District
Saturday, 28 July 2018, 1015-1315 Hours, March, 2600 S. Kostner Avenue to Saucedo School - 2850 W. 24th Boulevard. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "Prayer Walk."

018th District
Saturday, 29 July 2018, 1130-1600 Hours, Rally, 800 N. Michigan Avenue. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "Slutwalk Chicago 2018."

018th District
Wednesday, 01 August 2018, 1300 Hours, Assembly, 400 N. Michigan Avenue.- 737 N. Michigan Avenue. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "Policies of Japanese Government."

011-012 District
Thursday, 02 August 2018, 1330-1500 Hours, March & Rally, Crane High School - 2245 W. Jackson Boulevard. The group will assemble regarding their campaign "After School Noah's Arc Foundation Peace March."

019th District
Thursday, 02 August 2018, 1600 Hours, Protest & March, Step-off at 1600hrs from Lake Shore Drive at Diversey Parkway. This group will assemble regarding their campaign, " Anti-Violence March."

Unclassified / For Official Use Only

It should be noted that some of this information describes First Amendment protected activities. The CPIC recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government. The CPIC safeguards these rights and only reports on First Amendment protected activities for operational planning in the interest of assuring the safety and security of the public including demonstrators and public safety personnel. The CPIC will continue to communicate these events with other law enforcement partners in an effort to facilitate the Chicago Police Department's mission of protecting the lives, property and rights of all people, to maintain order, and enforce the law impartially. For comments or questions contact the CPIC at 312-745-5669 or CPIC @ChicagoPolice.org.

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
Crime Prevention and Information Center

Counterterrorism Section
Daily Awareness and Homeland Security Brief

27 July 2018

Upcoming Special Events

Peruvian Festival – 28 July @ 2735 N. Avers St.

South Loop Beer and Cider Fest – 28 July @ 1801 S. Indiana Ave.

Bantu Fest – 28 July @ 1130 Midway Plaisance, Ellis Ave. – Dorchester Ave.

Ghana Fest- 28 July @ 5600 S. Russell Drive –Washington Park

Closed Loop Forum and Fest – 28 July @ 1400 W. 46th St.

Farragut High School Annual Alumni Picnic – 28 July @ 2800-3100 W. Ogden Ave – Douglas Park

Henry Horner's 15th Annual Picnic – 28 July @ 1501 W. Randolph – Union Park

Randolph Street Market Festival – 28 to 29 July @ 1340 W. Randolph St.

St. Mark Parish Kermes – 29 July @ 1041-1040 N. Campbell Ave.

West Loop Family Fest – 29 July @ 830-1000 W. Washington Ave.

St. Gall Kermes – 02 – 05 August @ 5147 S. Kedzie Ave.

Our Lady of Snow Parish Carnival – 02- 05 August @ 4810 S. Leamington Ave.

Revival Chicago – 01-12 August @ 1924 W. 63rd St.

Unclassified / For Official Use Only

It should be noted that some of this information describes First Amendment protected activities. The CPIC recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government. The CPIC safeguards these rights and only reports on First Amendment protected activities for operational planning in the interest of assuring the safety and security of the public including demonstrators and public safety personnel. The CPIC will continue to communicate these events with other law enforcement partners in an effort to facilitate the Chicago Police Department's mission of protecting the lives, property and rights of all people, to maintain order, and enforce the law impartially. For comments or questions contact the CPIC at 312-745-5669 or CPIC @ChicagoPolice.org.

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
Crime Prevention and Information Center

Counterterrorism Section
Daily Awareness and Homeland Security Brief

27 July 2018

Media Reporting

(U) Palestinian Knife Attack Kills Israeli in the West Bank

A Palestinian assailant entered an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, stabbed one person to death and wounded two others before he was shot and killed, the Israeli military and a hospital spokeswoman said. "A terrorist infiltrated into the community and stabbed three civilians. The terrorist was shot and killed," the Israeli military said. Israeli media reports said the assailant was shot by a fellow resident of the Adam settlement, which lies between Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Ramallah. There was no immediate comment from Palestinian officials. Hamas, the Islamist group that rules the Palestinian Gaza Strip, praised the attack. Its spokesman Fawzi Barhoum, said it was a "heroic and brave operation that came in response to the daily, ugly crimes conducted by the Israeli occupation against our people." Source: Reuters

(U) IS-linked Group Continues to Promote Biological Terrorism in West

An Islamic State (IS)-linked group continued its promotion of biological terrorism in the West with a second poster just days after publication of video inciting for such attacks. Al-Abd Al-Faqir Media issued the posted on July 23, 2018, showing on it a green smoke cloud and the Arabic and English text: "Bio-Terror - Just Terror." The group had released a video on July 20 entitled "Bio-Terror," providing instructions on how to acquire bacteria to cause epidemics and suggesting where to deploy it. Source: SITE Intelligence Group

(U) Two Suspected Bangladeshi Terrorists Arrested In India

Two terrorists allegedly from Bangladesh were on Tuesday arrested from Noida in Uttar Pradesh. The two have been identified as Musharraf Hussain and Rubel Ahmed. The two terrorists hiding in Noida, India were arrested by a joint team of Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terror Squad and West Bengal Police. Police officers involved in the operation to arrest the two terrorists said that they were planning to carry out a major terror strike in the national capital. Source: Zee News - India

(U) Oakland Police Officer Attacked With M-1000

Unidentified suspects targeted and attacked Officers with Improvised Explosive Device (M-1000), WRAPPED IN NAILS AND OTHER SHRAPNEL, during a public gathering in Oakland, CA.
According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) an M-1000 is commonly referred to as a "Quarter Stick".

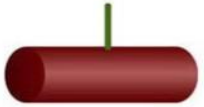


IMAGE IS NOT AN ACTUAL SIZE

AVERAGE SIZE: 1 INCH DIAMETER, 6 inches long
AVERAGE LOAD: 25-30 GMS EXPLOSIVE MIXTURE
RISK FACTOR: EXTREME SEVERE INJURIES / HAVE CAUSED DEATH

Unclassified / For Official Use Only

It should be noted that some of this information describes First Amendment protected activities. The CPIC recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government. The CPIC safeguards these rights and only reports on First Amendment protected activities for operational planning in the interest of assuring the safety and security of the public including demonstrators and public safety personnel. The CPIC will continue to communicate these events with other law enforcement partners in an effort to facilitate the Chicago Police Department's mission of protecting the lives, property and rights of all people, to maintain order, and enforce the law impartially. For comments or questions contact the CPIC at 312-745-5669 or CPIC @ChicagoPolice.org.

FEMA
REGION V

Morning Brief

Friday, July 27, 2018

WATER ADVISORY – Parchment City, MI

FEMA
REGION V

SPOT Report: Michigan-Kalamazoo County- Water Advisory-07272018- Initial

Parchment City, MI residents were told to stop using tap water yesterday after high levels of PFAS were found in the public system.

Advisory applies to Parchment City & Cooper Township

- About 3,000 people affected

PFAS levels are said to be 20x the level considered safe

Bottled water will begin being provided this morning.

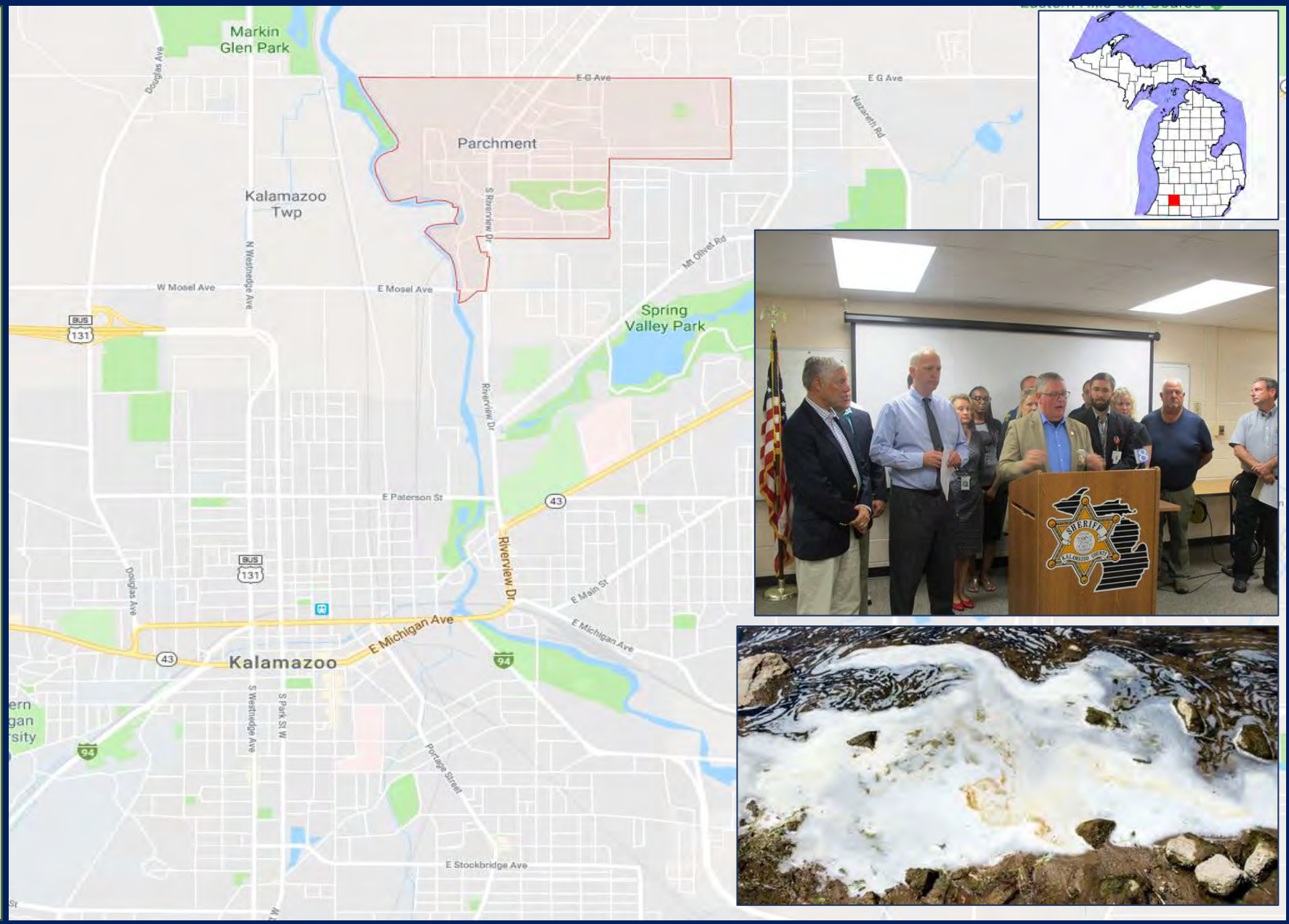
- Boiling will <u>not</u> eliminate the chemical from water

It is still unknown how or when PFAS entered the water supply

- PFAS (perfluoroalkyl & polyfluoroalkyl) is used in manufacturing and firefighting. Exposure to it has been linked to "some cancers, thyroid disorders, elevated cholesterol and other diseases."

There are no unmet needs reported by the state.

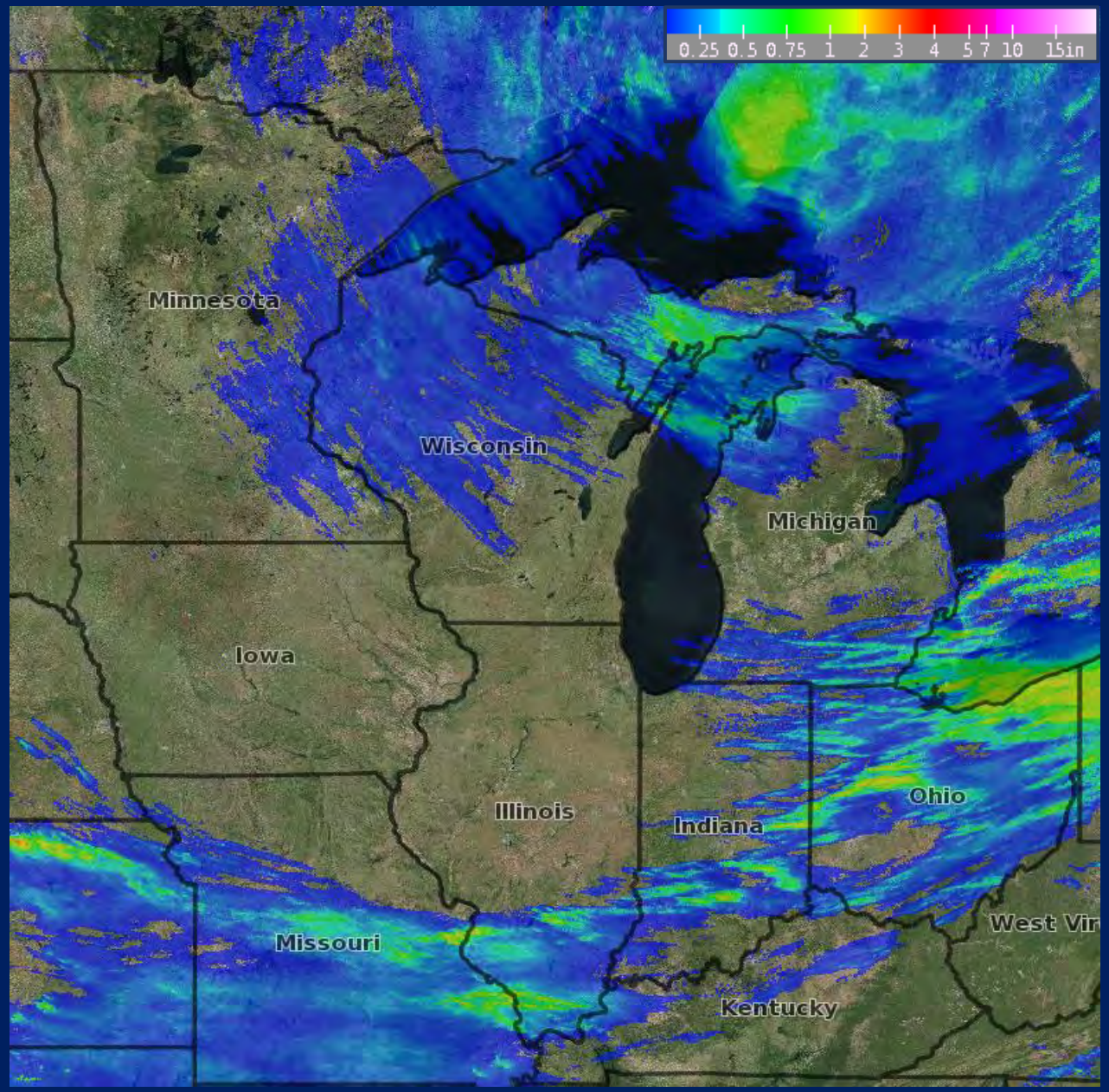
MI SEOC is at Full Activation / Assessment & Monitoring.



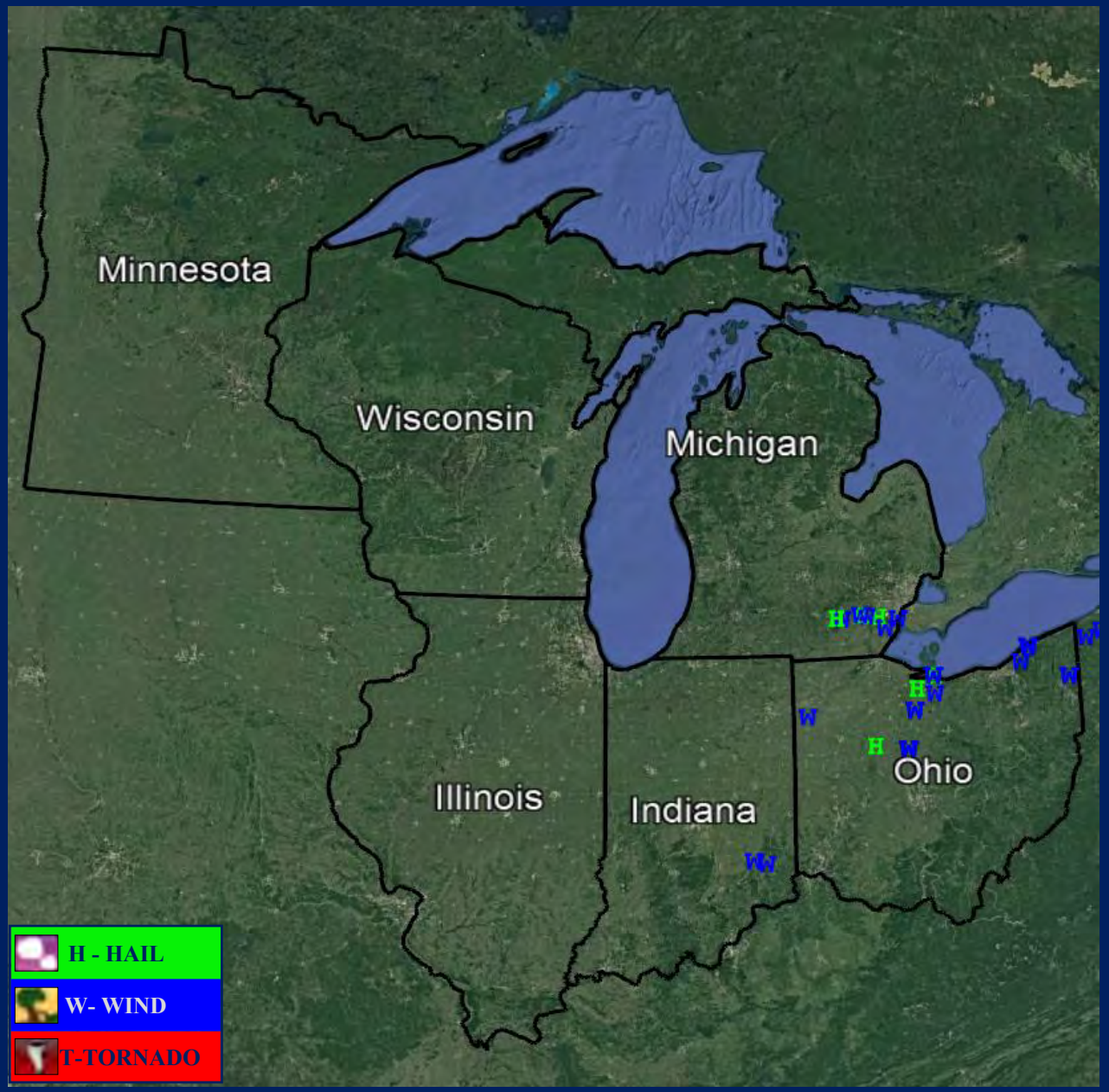
WEATHER SUMMARY (Last 24 Hours)

FEMA
REGION V

PRECIPITATION



STORM REPORTS



WEATHER SUMMARY (Last 24 Hours)

FEMA
REGION V

OHIO

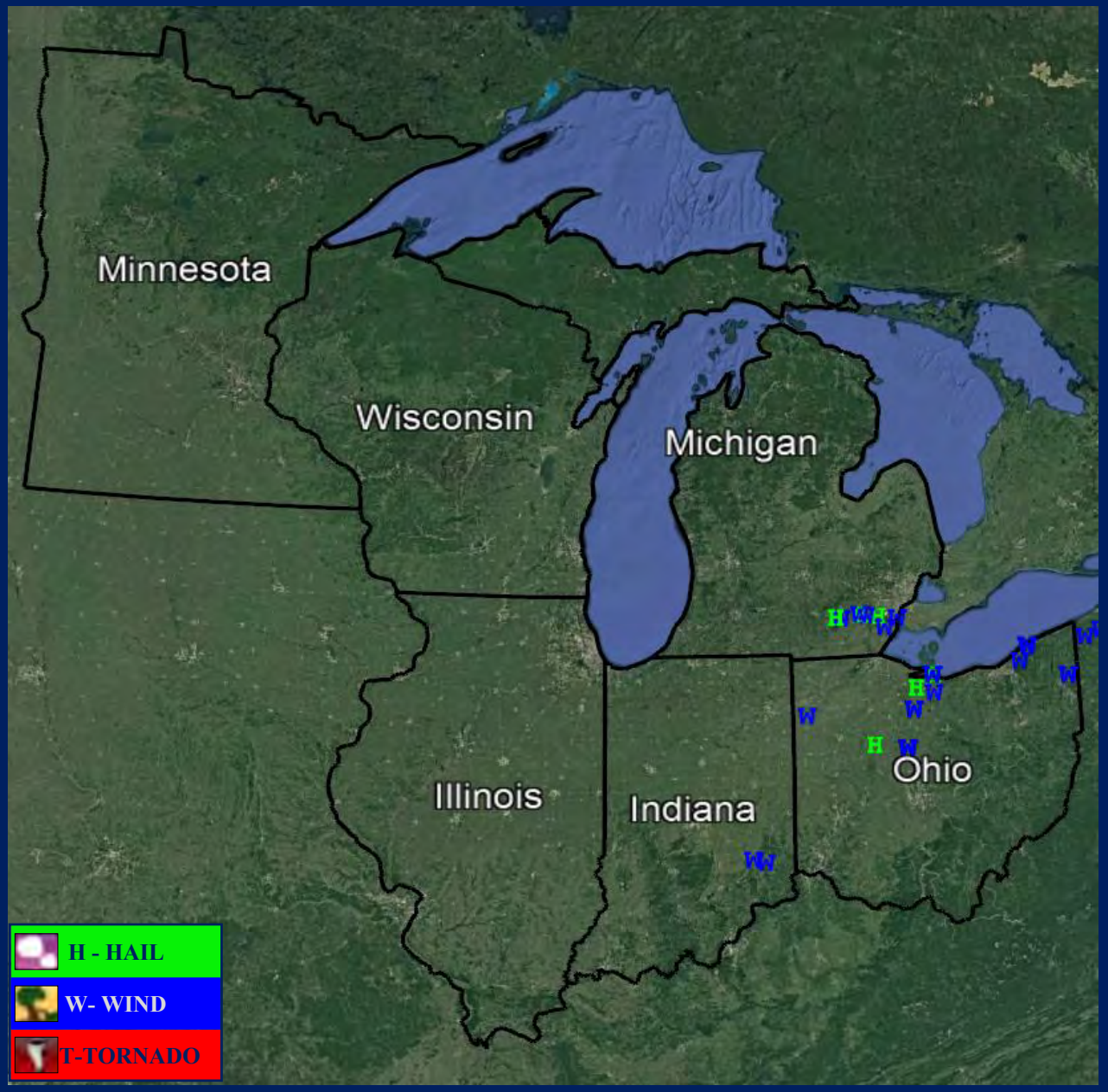
Erie Co.: Two buildings were significantly damaged in Sandusky. Roofs of both buildings were ripped off and flew into a nearby parking lot, damaging six cars.

Paulding Co.: A microburst brining 50 mph winds impacted the Village of Havilland, damaging two commercial complexes and multiple utility lines.

Lake Co.: Some local roads were closed due to high water.

Trumbull, Seneca Co.: High winds damaged trees and power lines.

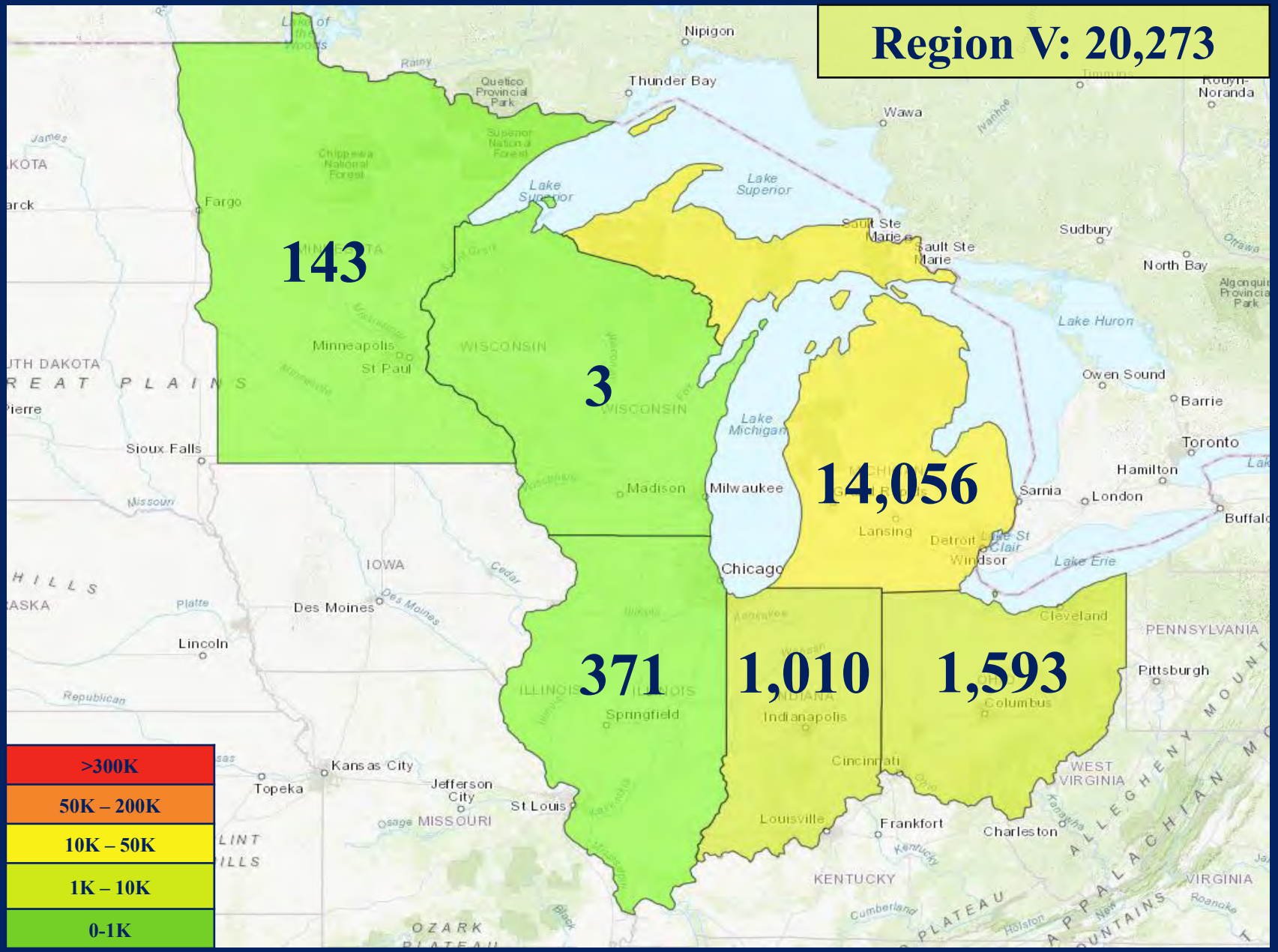
STORM REPORTS



INFRASTRUCTURE STATUS

FEMA
REGION V

POWER OUTAGES



CONDITIONS & THREATS

	AIRPORT STATUS	ROADWAY STATUS	NUCLEAR FACILITIES
IL			
IN			
MI			
MN			
OH		NE	
WI			

EXCESSIVE	MASS FLOODING	GENERAL EMGY
SIGNIFICANT	FLOODING	SITE AREA EMGY
MODERATE	SNOW/ICE	ALERT
LOW	DEBRIS	UNUSUAL EVENT
NORMAL	NORMAL	NORMAL

	GEOMAGNETIC STORMS	SOLAR RADIATION STORMS		RADIO BLACKOUTS	
DAY 1	None	S1 or GREATER	1%	R1 – R2	1%
				R3 – R5	1%
DAY 2	None		1%	R1 – R2	1%
				R3 – R5	1%

G5 EXTREME	S5 EXTREME	R5 EXTREME
G4 SEVERE	S4 SEVERE	R4 SEVERE
G3 STRONG	S3 STRONG	R3 STRONG
G2 MODERATE	S2 MODERATE	R2 MODERATE
G1 MINOR	S1 MINOR	R1 MINOR

REGION V READINESS

FEMA
REGION V

OPERATIONS STATUS

RRCC	NORMAL OPERATIONS
RWC	WATCH / STEADY STATE
IMAT	AVAILABLE
DCE	AVAILABLE
LNO	AVAILABLE
NTAS	NO ACTIVE ALERTS

STATE OPERATIONS STATUS

ILLINOIS	NORMAL OPERATIONS
INDIANA	NORMAL OPERATIONS
MICHIGAN	FULL OPERATIONS *(Assessment & Monitoring)*
MINNESOTA	NORMAL OPERATIONS
OHIO	NORMAL OPERATIONS
WISCONSIN	NORMAL OPERATIONS

THIS WEEK

TRAINING & EXERCISES

NEXT WEEK

TRAINING:

- **Jul 30:** Procurement Standards Training; Chicago, IL
- **Aug 16:** Managing Multiple Projects, Objectives and Deadlines; Chicago, IL
- **Aug 20:** L0583 Overview of EM for Tribal Leaders; Shelbyville, MI
- **Aug 22-23:** FERS/CRCS Retirement Course; Chicago, IL
- **Aug 24:** L0583 Overview of EM for Tribal Leaders; Cass Lake, MN
- **Aug 27-29:** L141 Instructional Presentation and Evaluation Skills; Chicago, IL
- **Aug 28-30:** L426 Building a Roadmap to Resilience; Columbus, OH
- **Sep 5:** AWR-351 REP Ingestion Core Concepts; South Bend, IN
- **Sep 11:** Active Shooter / Active Violence Prevention; Chicago, IL
- **Sep 18-20:** Project Management Principles; Chicago, IL

EXERCISES:

- **Aug 7:** LaSalle REPEX, Illinois
- **Aug 28:** Fermi REPEX, Michigan
- **Sep 11:** Great Lakes Radiant Response, Senior Leader TTX, Chicago, IL

DISASTER DECLARATION STATUS

PDA SUMMARY:

	Event	Event Date	Type	Requested	Completed	Start/End
MN	Flooding	6/15-7/8/2018	PA	28	2	7/19/2018 – TBD
				3 Tribes	0	7/19/2018 - TBD

DECLARATION REQUESTS:

- On July 9, 2018, the Governor of Michigan requested a Major Disaster Declaration as a result of severe flooding and mudslides during the period of June 16-17. The Governor is requesting Individual and Public Assistance for three (3) counties and Hazardous Mitigation statewide. The request is in process.
- On July 20, 2018, the Governor of Wisconsin requested a Major Disaster Declaration as a result of severe storms, flooding, and straight-line winds during the period of June 15-19, 2018. The Governor is requesting Public Assistance for six (6) counties and Hazard Mitigation statewide. The request is in process.

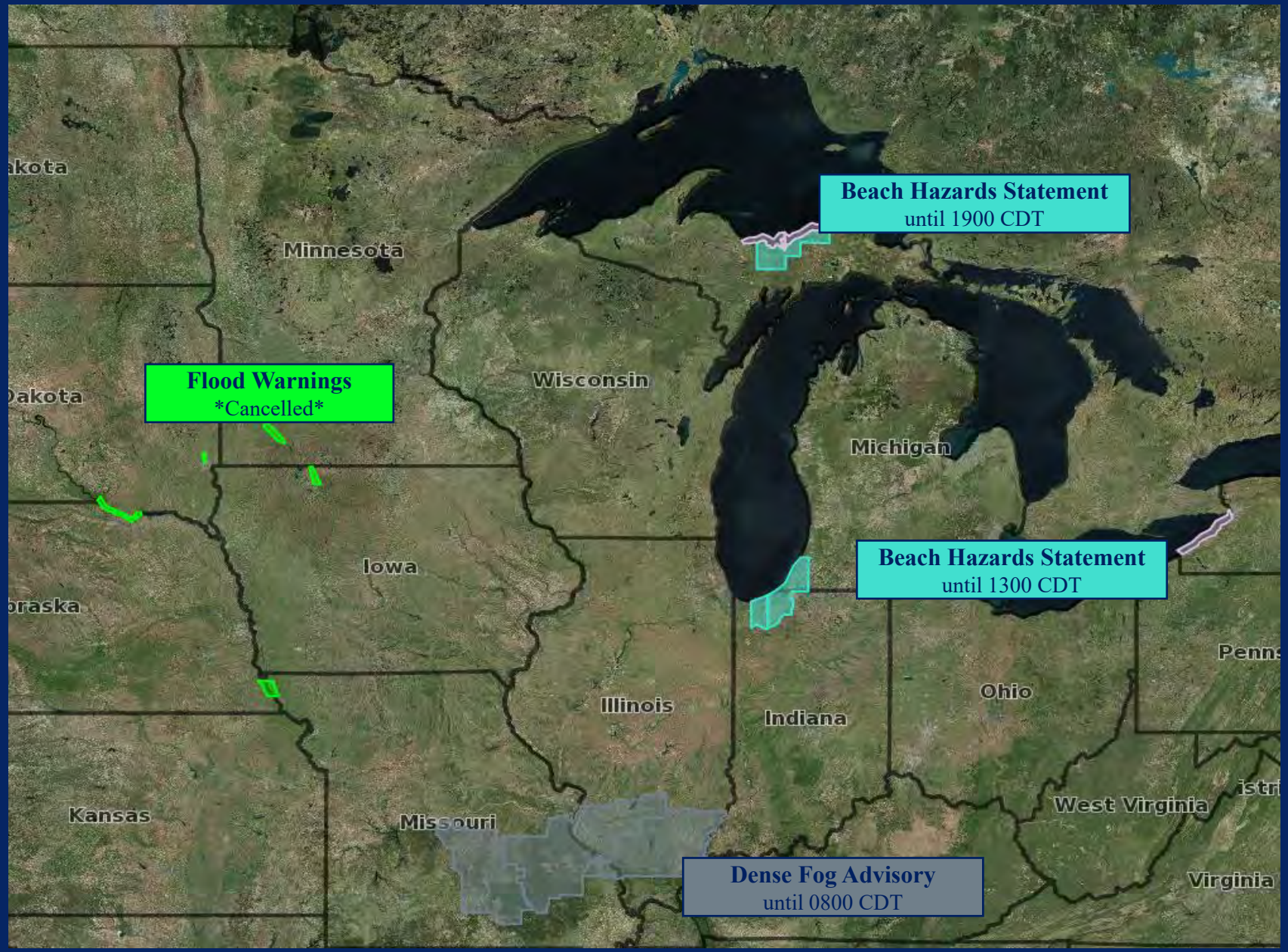
DECLARATIONS:

- **FEMA-4363-DR-IN.** On May 4, 2018, the President approved a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Indiana as a result of severe storms and flooding during the period of February 14-March 4, 2018. Individual Assistance for nine (9) counties, Public Assistance for 27 counties and Hazard Mitigation statewide. The FCO is David Samaniego.
  - Amendment #1: On June 5, 2018, thirteen (13) counties were added for Individual Assistance.
  - Amendment #2: On June 5, 2018, one (1) county was added for Public Assistance.
- **FEMA-4360-DR-OH.** On April 17, 2018, the President approved a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Ohio as a result of severe storms, flooding, and landslides during the period February 14-25. It provides Public Assistance for 18 counties and Hazard Mitigation statewide.. The FCO is Steven Johnson.
  - Amendment #1: On May 24, 2018, four (4) counties were added for Public Assistance.
- **FEMA-4343-DR-WI.** On October 07, 2017, the President approved a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Wisconsin as a result of severe storms, mudslides, flooding, and straight-line winds during the period of July 19-23. It provides Public Assistance for 11 counties and Hazard Mitigation statewide. The FCO is Janet Odeshoo.

CURRENT WEATHER

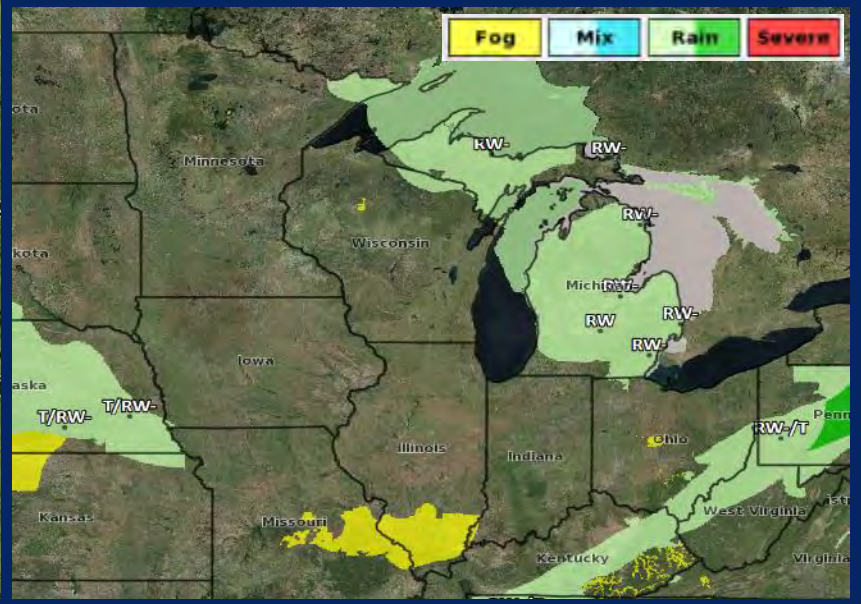
FEMA
REGION V

WATCHES & WARNINGS



RADAR

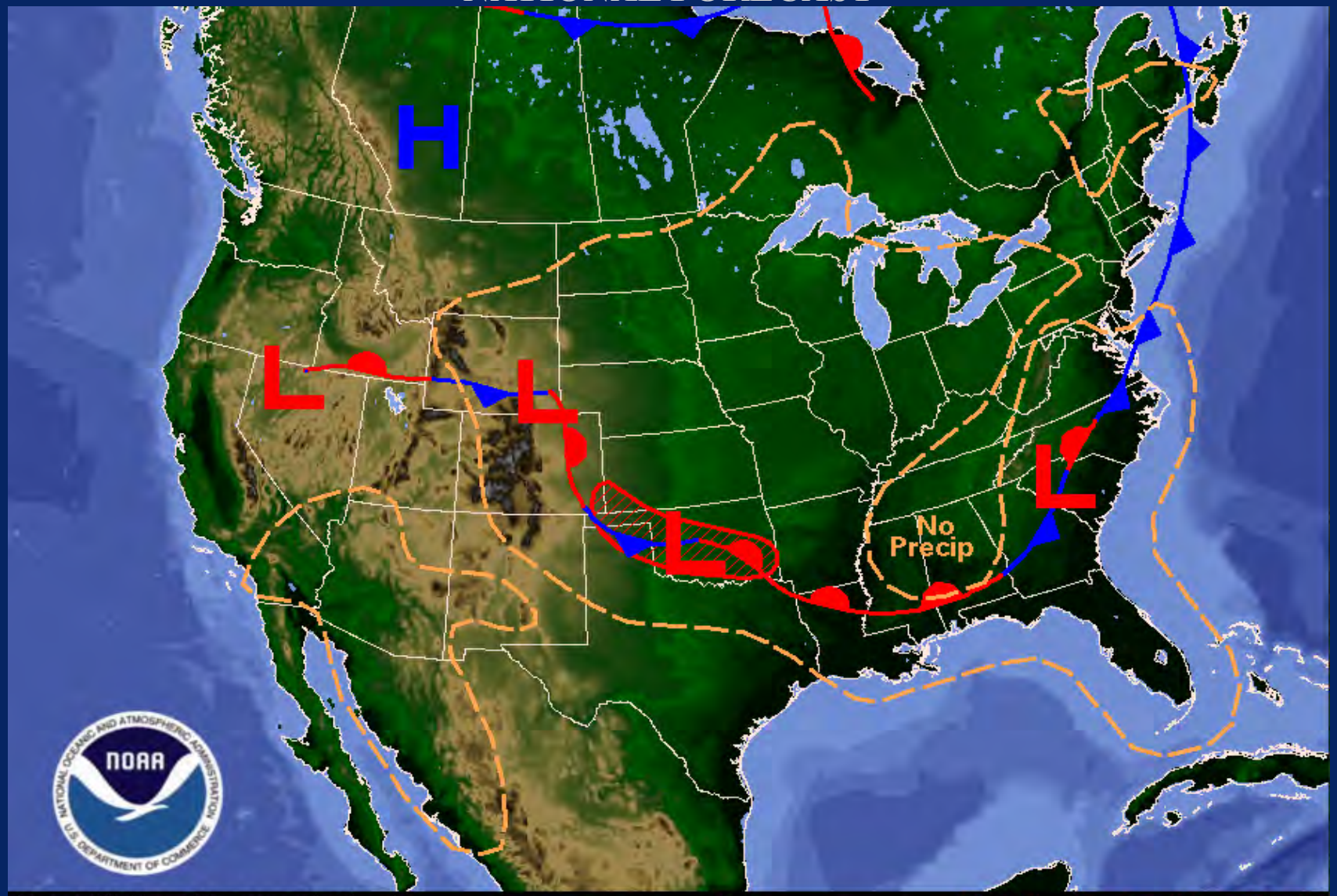
WEATHER



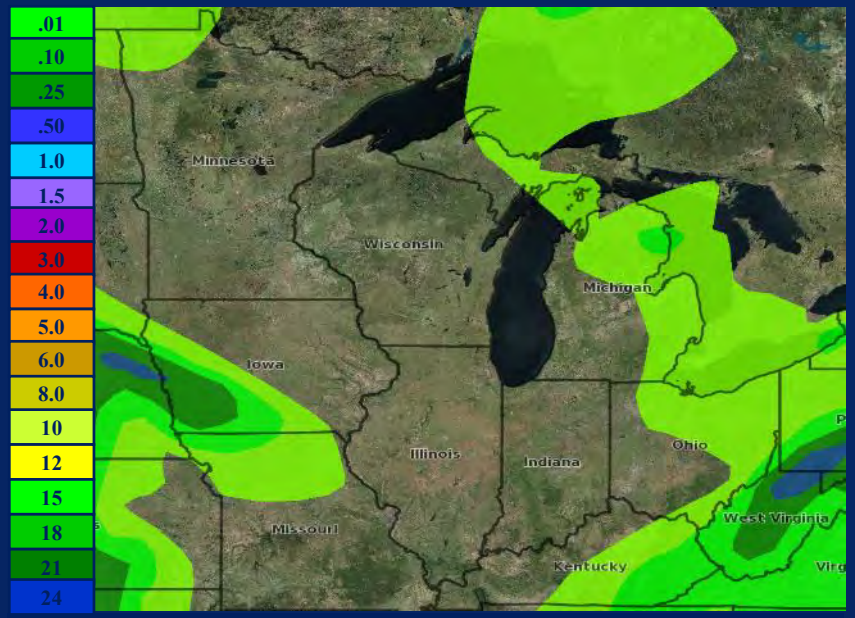
DAY 1 FORECAST

FEMA
REGION V

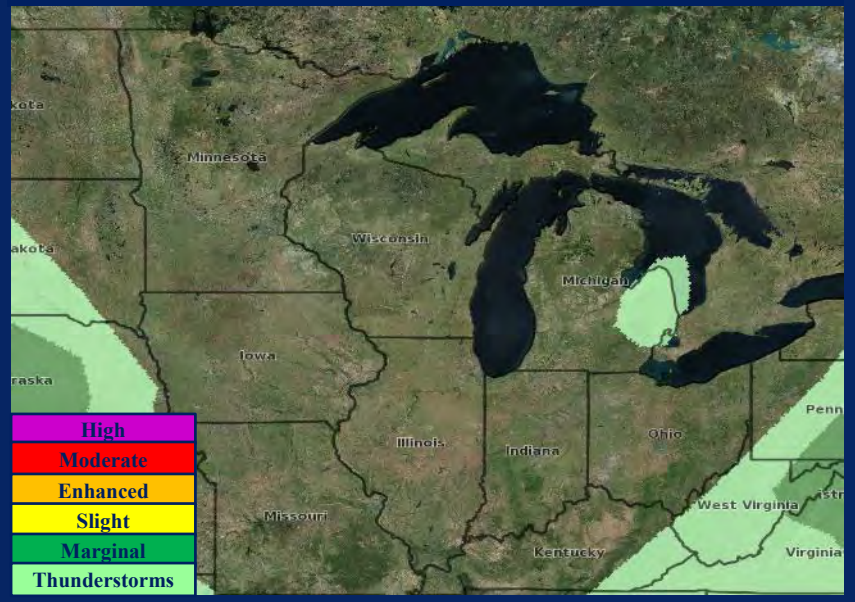
NATIONAL FORECAST



PRECIPITATION



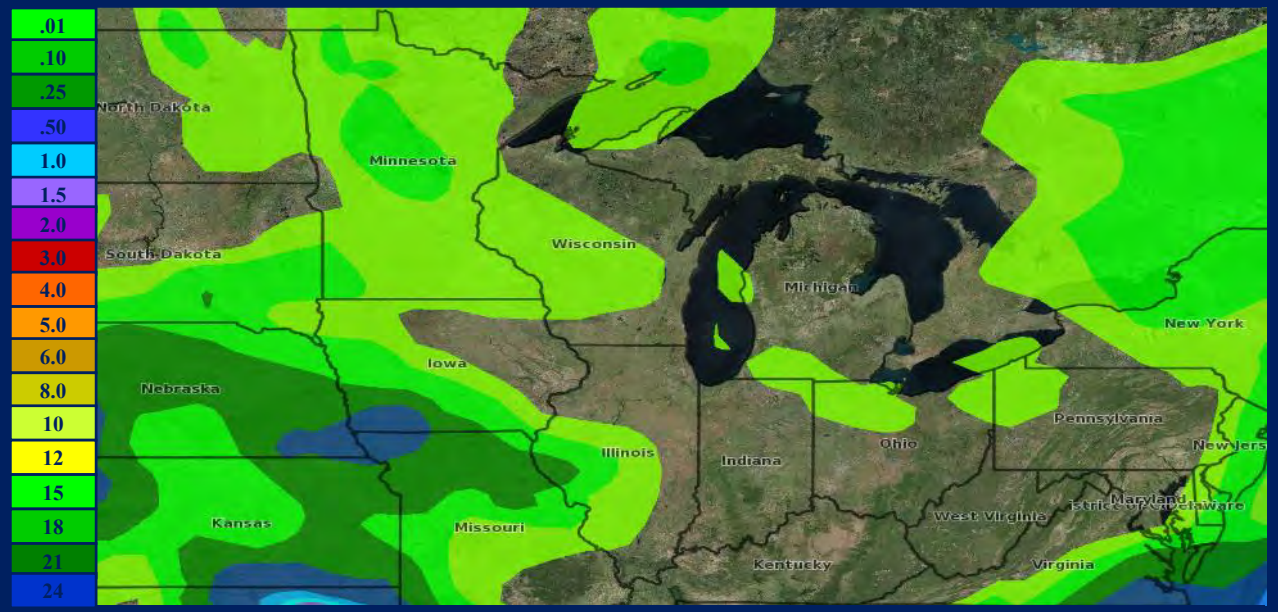
CONVECTIVE OUTLOOK



DAY 2 & 3 REGIONAL FORECAST

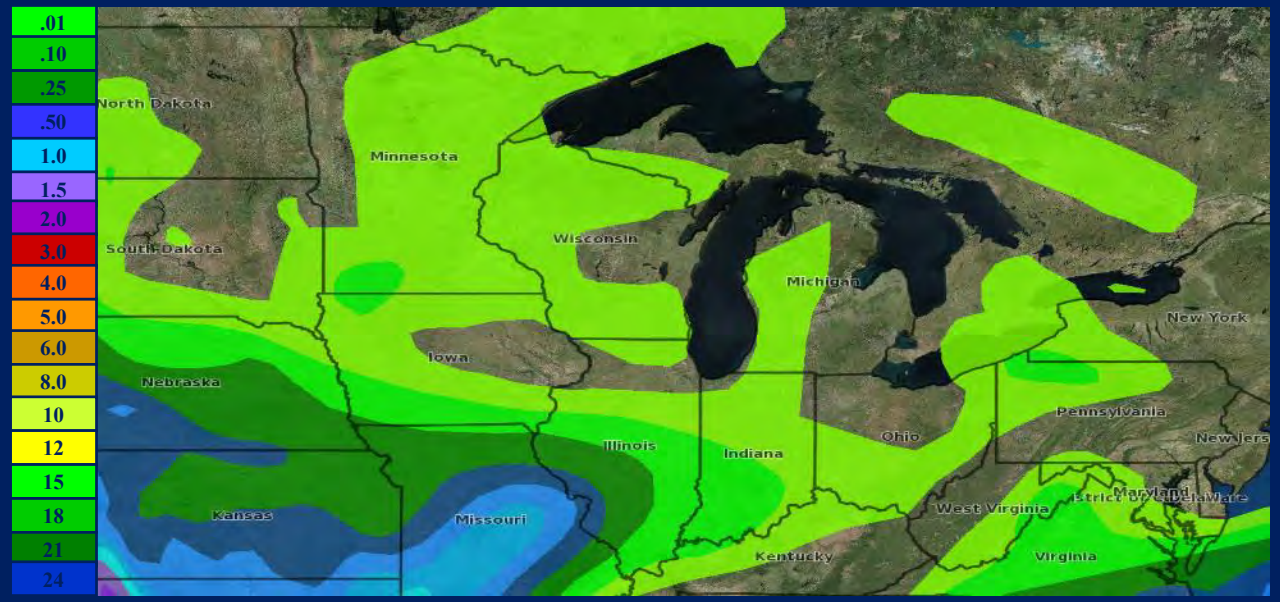
FEMA
REGION V

DAY 2 PRECIPITATION



DAY 2 CONVECTIVE

DAY 3 PRECIPITATION

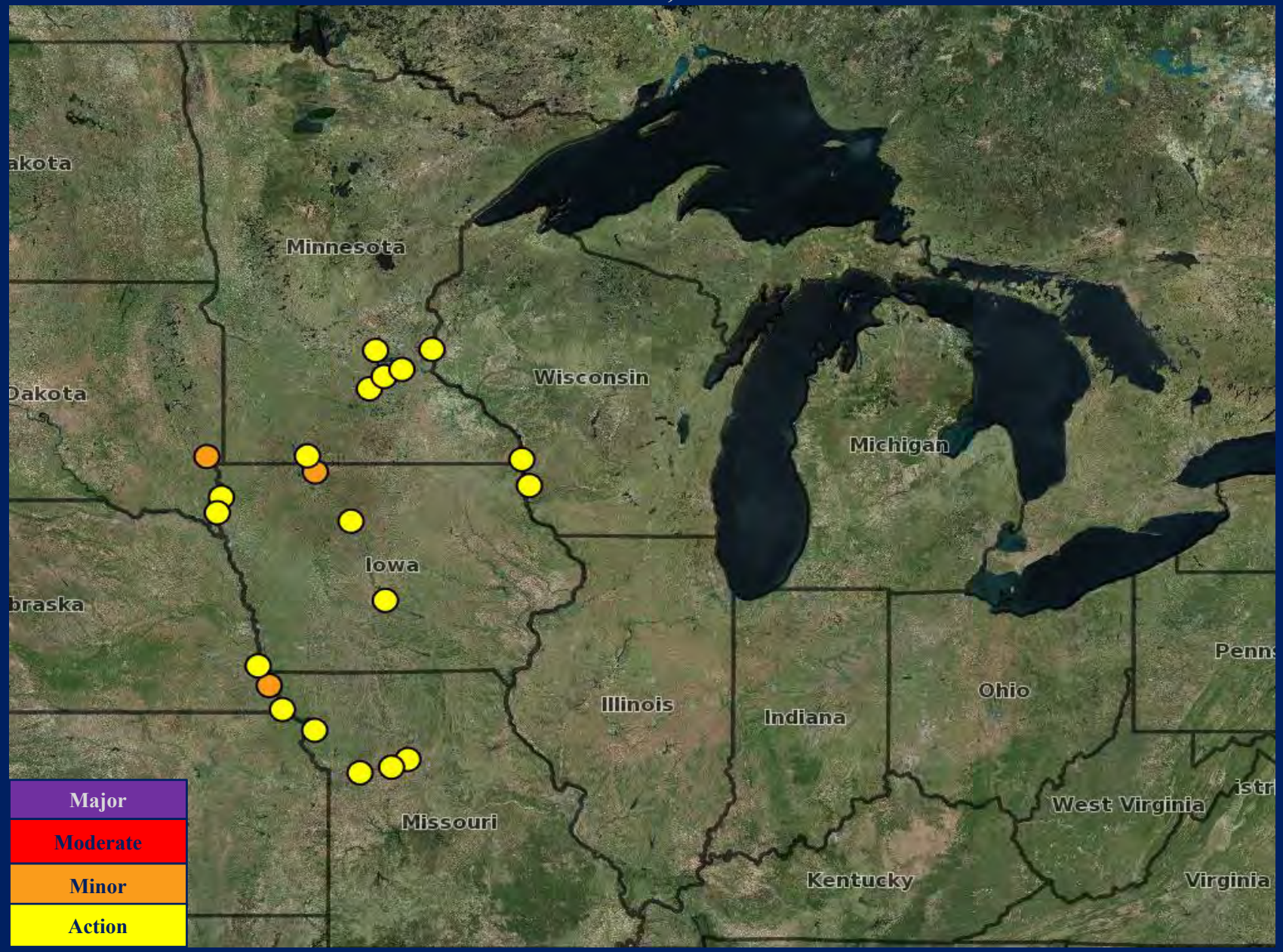


DAY 3 CONVECTIVE

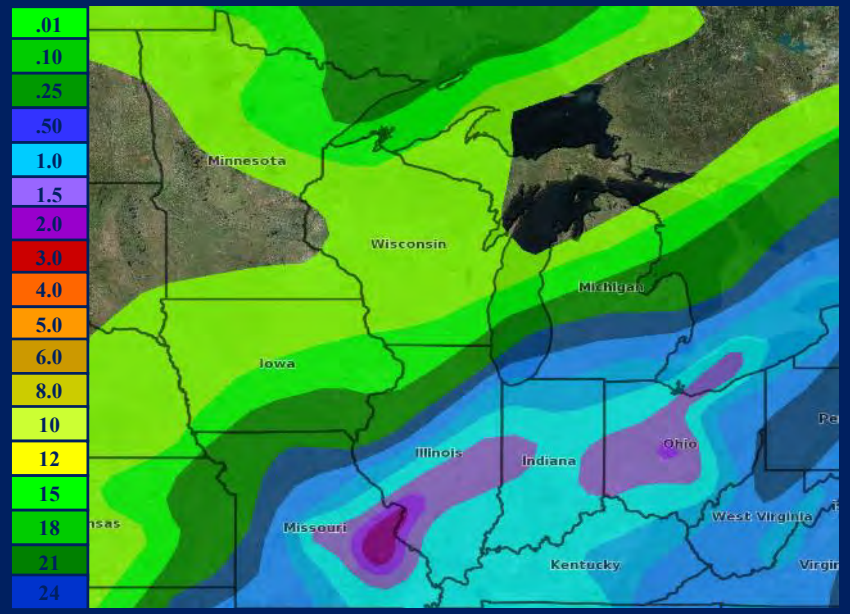
HYDROLOGIC OUTLOOK

FEMA
REGION V

RIVER GAUGES, FORECAST



DAY 4-5 PRECIPITATION



SIGNIFICANT RIVER FLOODING

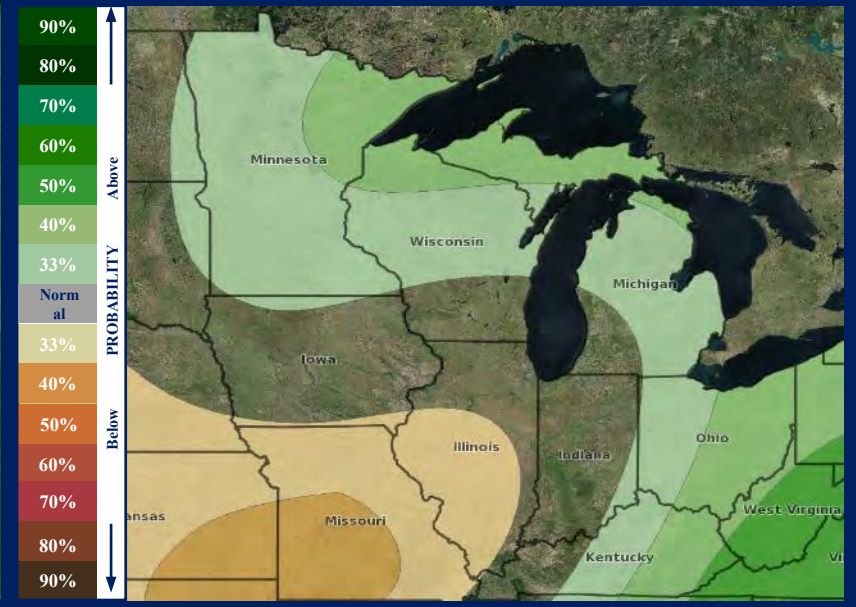
EXTENDED OUTLOOK

FEMA
REGION V

3-7 DAY HAZARDS OUTLOOK

DAY 6-10 TEMPERATURE

DAY 6-10 PRECIPITATION



FEMA's Mission:

Helping people before, during, and after a disaster.

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BY BULLETIN INTELLIGENCE WWW.BULLETININTELLIGENCE.COM/DHS

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 27, 2018 5:00 AM EDT

TODAY'S EDITION

Leading DHS News

Hundreds Of Migrant Children Remain In Custody, Though Most Separated Families Are Reunited At Court Deadline (WP) ... 4
Federal Authorities Say They Have Met Deadline To Reunite Migrant Families (NYT) ... 5
Administration: 1,820 Children Reunited After Border Split (AP) . 7
Most Children, Parents Separated At U.S.-Mexican Border Reunited: Court Filing (REU) ... 9
As Reunification Deadline Arrives, Fear And Uncertainty Persist For Many Migrant Families (LAT) ... 9
Feds Race To Reunify Immigrant Families Separated At Border To Meet Court-imposed Deadline (AZCENTRAL) ... 10
Tensions Rise At Court Deadline To Reunite Migrant Families (POLITICO) ... 11
Under Deadline, Government Scrambles To Reunite Migrant Families : NPR (NPR) ... 12
Government Rushes To Meet Family-Reunification Deadline (WSJ) ... 13

Border Wall

Speaker Says Trump Willing To Be 'Patient' For Wall Funding (CQRC) ... 13

Aviation Security

TSA Should Set Goals For Officer Training At Glynco, Ga. Academy (MYAJC) ... 14
JFK Airport Scanner Could Let Passengers Keep Laptops In Their Bags (NYPOST) ... 14

Immigration Policy

Migrant Parents Were Misled Into Waiving Rights To Family Reunification, ACLU Tells Court (WP) ... 14
Family Separation Crisis Continues On Border Even As Court-ordered Deadline Nears (LAT) ... 16
DHS Watchdog To Investigate Border Family Separations (CNNINTL) ... 18
Dems Call For Investigation Into DOJ's Role In Family Separation Policy (HILL) ... 18
Central America Demands Information On Still-Separated Migrant Children (REU) ... 19
GOP-led House Committee Rebuffs Trump Administration On Immigrant Asylum Claim Policy (WP) ... 19
U.S. Must Face Multistate Lawsuit Over Census Citizenship Question (REU) ... 19
Trump's Victory Lap Over Citizenship Question Could Sink 2020 Census Effort (WT) ... 19
Citing Trump Attacks On Immigrants, Judge Allows Suit Over Census Question (NYT) ... 20
Judge Allows Lawsuit Against Trump's Census Citizenship Question To Proceed (HILL) ... 21
ACLU Sues N.J. Schools That Prevent Immigrant Children From Enrolling (PHILINQ) ... 22
Children Lead Sit-in At Senate Building In Protest Of Trump's Family Separation Policy (WP) ... 23
ICE Jail Contract Protest Interrupts County Board Meeting (AP) 24

Immigration Enforcement

ICE Arrests Man In James City County As Part Of Statewide Crackdown (WILYDAILY) ... 24
ICE Quest For Detention Sites Puts Trump County On Tightrope (AP) ... 24
Microsoft Employees Question C.E.O. Over Company's Contract With ICE (NYT) ... 28
Vermont Tech Gets Pushback For ICE Contracts (VTD) ... 28
ICE Steps Up Presence In Madison (MADCT) ... 29
9th Circuit Says Restaurant's Employment Records Must Be Suppressed In Immigration Case (REU) ... 30
Immigrant Mother Fights To Remain In New Orleans With Her Family (NOTP) ... 30
Immigration Officials Target 75 New Jersey Businesses (AP) ... 31
ICE Targets 75 N.J. Businesses Suspected Of Hiring Unauthorized Immigrants Or Other Violations (NJCOM) .. 32
Is Enough Being Done To Hold Employers Accountable In Roundups Of Undocumented Workers? Editorial Board Roundtable (PLAINDLR) ... 32
ICE Set To Deport Wife Of Marine, An Iraq War Veteran, In August (NSWK) ... 33
17-Year Old Guatemalan Girl Fears Deportation (AZPUBLIC) .. 34

Criminal Investigations

Feds Bust Illegal Immigrants On ID Fraud (WT) ... 34

Lynn Residents Charged In Federal Document And Benefit Fraud Scam (LYNNDI) 35
Sessions: Undocumented Identity Thieves Scammed Puerto Ricans To Get Gov't Benefits (NBCNEWS)..... 35
Undocumented Immigrants Who Stole Puerto Rican Identities To Gain Government Benefits Arrested, Jeff Sessions Says (NSWK)..... 36
Clothing, Jewelry, Prescription Drugs Among America's Most Counterfeited Items (USAT) 36
Amid Push To Expel Liberian War Criminals, Feds' Latest Philly Target Agrees To Leave U.S. (PHILINQ) 38
Fort Myers Man Gets Five Years In Prison In National Telephone And Money Laundering Scam (FTMYR) 39
Marriage-fraud Ring Arranged 50 Sham Weddings In Brevard County, Feds Say (ORLS)..... 40

Secret Service

Duluth Man Sentenced For Participation In $1 Million International Email Scam (GWINDP)..... 40
Judge Won't Order Disclosure Of Trump White House Visitor Logs (POLITICO)..... 41

Emergency Response

Shoddy IT Is Limiting FEMA's Ability To Respond To Disasters, IG Says (NEXTGOV)..... 42

Coast Guard

Self-taught Businessman With No Engineering Credentials Designed Missouri Duck Boat, Records Say (WP)..... 42
Heavy Polar Icebreaker Questions Mount For Coast Guard (DN) 44

Cyber News

Report: China, Russia And Iran Ramp Up Economic Spying On US (AP)..... 44
These 3 Countries Pose The Biggest Cyber Threats, U.S. Officials Say (FORTUNE)..... 45
U.S. Intel Cites China, Russia, Iran As "Aggressive" Perpetrators Of Cyber Espionage (CBSNEWS)..... 46
Chinese Theft Continues In Cyberspace As New Threats Emerge, U.S. Intelligence Officials Warn (WP) 47
China, Russia, Iran Top Cyber Threats, U.S. Intelligence Finds (BLOOM) 48
China Is Still Stealing America's Business Secrets, US Officials Say (DEFONE) 49
China, Russia, Iran Pose Grave Cyber Espionage Threat: Government Report (HILL)..... 50
US Warns Of Supply Chain Cyber-attacks (BBC) 50
How China, Russia, Iran Target US With Economic Espionage (AP) 51
DHS Plots Multiple Cyber Initiatives (POLITICO) 52
Former Trump Official: No One 'Minding The Store' At White House On Cyberthreats (YAHOO)..... 54
Former Top Trump Aide Asks 'Who's Minding The Store' On Cyber-threats (MSNBC) 55
The Cybersecurity 202: Agencies Struggling With Basic Cybersecurity Despite Trump's Pledge To Prioritize It (WP)..... 56
GAO Asks Whether Trump Admin. Erred By Axing Cybersecurity Coordinator (WFED) 58
Russian Hackers' New Target: A Vulnerable Democratic Senator (DAYBEST)..... 59
Key Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill Targeted In Password-stealing Scheme By Russian Hackers: Report (FOX)..... 61
Democratic Sen. McCaskill Confirms Russian Hacking Attempt (AP)..... 61
'Putin Is A Thug,' McCaskill Says After Reported Russian Hacking Attempt Against Her (MCT)..... 62
McCaskill Says Senate Office Was Target Of Phishing Scam (WSJ) 63
Claire McCaskill, A Vulnerable Democrat Running For Reelection, Targeted In Hacking Attempt By Russian Spies (WP)..... 63
Russian Agent Visited Election Websites In 2 Georgia Counties In 2016 (MYAJC) 63
Illinois Congressional Delegation Requests Election Security Briefing Because State Was A 'Major Target' In 2016 (CHIT) 64
Reed, Leahy Amendment Would Provide $250M For State Election Security Grants (WRWKPST) 65
Partisan Clash Over Election System Security Looming In Senate (CQRC) 66
CIO Dana Deasy Issues DoD's Action Plan To Protect Public-Facing Web Services (EXECGV)..... 67
Sen. Ron Wyden Urges Agencies To Abandon Adobe Flash, Citing 'Inherent Security Vulnerabilities' (WT)..... 67
Another Shipping Giant Falls Victim To Ransomware (FORBES)..... 68
House Homeland Security Subcommittee Leaders, Witnesses Press For Cyber 'moonshot' At Hearing (INSCYBER) 68
Rep. Devin Nunes Suggests Banning Electronic Voting Systems To Protect Election Integrity (WT) 68
New Scam Tries To Blackmail With Bogus Porn Threats (FOX) 69

Terrorism Investigations

Competency Hearing Sought In Terrorist Support Case (AP).... 69
Teen Charged With Bringing Backpack Bomb To School To Be Tried As Adult (KSLTV) 70
Shackles, A Lion Rug, 56 Beanie Babies: Aubrey Trail's Attorney Wants His Client's Property Preserved (HASTRIB)..... 70
Fight Against Terror Entering A New Phase, Still Just As Vital (USAT) 71
Pelosi Refers To 9/11 Terror Attacks As 'Incident' During Border-security Remarks (WT) 72
State Department Working To Kill Sanctions On Terrorist Use Of Human Shields (WASHFRBE)..... 72
U.S. Allies Have Killed Thousands Of Yemeni Civilians From The Air. After 22 Died At A Wedding, One Village Asks, 'Why Us?' (WP) 73

Europe's Prisons Breed Terrorism. Can Anything Be Done? (WP) ... 75

Other DHS News

Portland, Ore., To Clean Up 'Disgusting' Occupy ICE Camp, Calling It Biohazard (FOX) ... 77
In Attempt To Save The Rarest Marine Mammal, Court Orders A Ban On Mexican Seafood Imports (LAT) ... 77
Number Of Occupy ICE Protesters Growing Outside Tampa's DHS Buildin (WFTSTV) ... 79

Global Media

Report: Italy Deports Convicted Islamic State Recruiter (AP) ... 79
Ontario Asks Feds For $200M To Pay For Asylum Seekers (TORSUN) ... 80

National News

Remains Of 55 U.S. War Dead In North Korea Start Journey Home After 65 Years (NYT) ... 80
U.S. Military Takes Possession Of Remains That North Korea Says Belong To Americans Who Died In The Korean War (WP) ... 81
Plane Said To Carry War Remains From North Korea Lands At U.S. Base (POLITICO) ... 82
First U.S. Troop Remains From North Korea Headed Home, White House Confirms (WT) ... 83
US Headed To North Korea To Bring Back Remains Of American Soldiers (WASHEX) ... 83
Aircraft Carrying Remains Of US Korean War Dead Departs N. Korea: WH (BREITBART) ... 83
US Warns Of North Korea's Global Outsourcing Of Forced Labor (AP) ... 84
The Big Lesson From Trump's Truce On Trade? Pushback Works. (WP) ... 84
Trump's Trade Truce With Europe Has A Familiar Feel: It Mirrors Obama's Path (NYT) ... 85
In Tentative Deal With E.U., Trump Touts Parts Of Global Trade Deals He Once Rejected (WP) ... 86
'Basically, We Opened Up Europe,' Trump Says — Despite No Final Trade Deal (HILL) ... 88
Trump Misleads Iowa Audience On Agriculture Deal (AXIOS) ... 88
Trump-Europe Trade Rift: What Was Settled, And What Wasn't? (AP) ... 89
Live: President Trump In Iowa And Illinois (CNN) ... 90
Trump Says Europe Will Buy More American Gas. Is That Possible? (NYT) ... 90
Larry Kudlow: E.U. Now Backs Trump's Trade Fight With China (WT) ... 91
U.S. Touts EU Trade Deal, Says Others Can Also Make Progress (REU) ... 91
Trump Touts 'Great Victory' At Downstate Steel Plant In First Visit To Illinois Since Taking Office (CHIT) ... 91
President Trump Touts Tariffs At Granite City Steel Plant (SLPD) ... 93
Trump Hails Illinois Steel Mill As Economic Success Story (WMAQTV) ... 94
Trump Laments Decades Of US Trade Policy At Downstate Steel Plant (AP) ... 94
Donald Trump Defends Tariffs In Key Political Area: Farm Country (USAT) ... 94
Donald Trump Visits Iowa To Talk To Officials, Educators And Business Leaders (DMR) ... 95
President Trump Assures Iowa Farmers Amid Uncertainty Over Future Of Trade War (ABCNEWS) ... 96
Trump Wants Auto Trade Probe To Continue, Action To Be Deferred: Ross (REU) ... 97
Wilbur Ross Says U.S. Investigation Of Auto Tariffs For Europe Will Go On Despite Deal (WT) ... 97
Europe Welcomes Trade Steps With U.S. But Many Questions Remain (WSJ) ... 97
US-EU Trade Agreement Wins Cautious Welcome In Germany (AP) ... 97
Europeans Are Skeptical Of Trade Truce With Trump (WP) ... 98
Europe Averts A Trade War With Trump. But Can It Trust Him? (NYT) ... 99
Trump Steel Tariffs Bring Hope, Prosperity Back To Granite City (SLPD) ... 100
Trump Trade War: U.S. Stock Market Is Faring Better Than China's Since Dispute Began (USAT) ... 101
Trump Uses Taxpayer-funded Trip To Campaign For GOP Candidates (WP) ... 102
Trump Is Using Tariffs To Advance A Radical Free-trade Agenda (WP) ... 103
Trump Floats Possible 5.3 Percent GDP Growth In Second Quarter (WASHEX) ... 104
Kudlow Says Friday's GDP Number Is Going To Be 'Big' (CNBC) ... 104
Trump's Trade War Boosts The Economy — Before It Bites (POLITICO) ... 105
Wilbur Ross Calls Out Firms For Using Tariffs As 'Excuse' For Firings (CQRC) ... 106
Report: Chinese Are 'Awed' By Trump's 'Skill As A Strategist And Tactician' (BREITBART) ... 106
The Chinese Are Wary Of Donald Trump's Creative Destruction (FT) ... 107
China Plans Retaliation For Any Amount Of U.S. Tariffs (BLOOM) ... 107
Lighthizer Signals Nafta Negotiations Could Wrap Up Next Month (BLOOM) ... 107
Robert Lighthizer, Trade Rep.: U.S. Closing In On NAFTA Agreement, China A 'Longer-Term Problem' (WT) ... 107
Indian Firm Wants Ohio Aluminum Maker. Will Trump Approve? (NYT) ... 108
Trump Administration Sets Sights On Libya's Oil Reserves In Behind-the-scenes Power Play (WT) ... 108
House OKs Defense Bill Authorizing A Pay Raise For Troops, New Hardware And Military Parade (USAT) ... 110
House Passes Annual Defense Bill, Avoiding Big Policy Clashes With Trump (WP) ... 110
Shadow Of A Role: John Kelly's 1-year Mark Approaches (CNN) ... 111

Trump Hits Media Over Russia Coverage: 'They're Dying To See Us Make A Little Bit Of A Mistake' (HILL) 113
Mueller Examining Trump's Tweets In Wide-Ranging Obstruction Inquiry (NYT) 114
Cohen Claims Trump Knew In Advance Of 2016 Trump Tower Meeting (CNN) 115
Secret Tape May Not Add To Legal Jeopardy For Trump Or Cohen (AP) 116
Trump Organization Finance Chief Called To Testify Before Federal Grand Jury (WSJ) 117
Former Bernie Sanders Consultant Assisting Mueller Investigation (POLITICO) 117
Stormy Daniels's Attorney Will Speak In Iowa, Fueling Speculation Of Possible Presidential Bid (WP) 118
Meadows Backs Off Impeaching Rosenstein After Leadership Talks (HILL) 119
Meadows Softens Push To Impeach Rosenstein After Talks With GOP Leadership (WT) 119
In Boston, AG Sessions Backs Rod Rosenstein (BOSGLOBE) 119
Impeach Rosenstein? C'mon, Man (NYT) 121
Sessions Defends Rosenstein Amid House GOP Impeachment Push (HILL) 122
Sessions Defends Deputy After Impeachment Move (AP) 122
Ryan Says He Opposes Conservatives' Effort To Impeach Deputy AG Rod Rosenstein (WP) 123
House Speaker Rejects Rosenstein Impeachment Effort (REU) 124
Paul Ryan Dismisses Impeachment Push For Rod Rosenstein (WT) 124
Ryan Opposes Rosenstein Impeachment Try, Likely Dooming It (AP) 125
Paul Ryan Opposes Impeaching Rod Rosenstein (WASHEX) 126
Ryan Rejects Conservative Push To Impeach Rosenstein (POLITICO) 126
Attorney General Jeff Sessions, House Leadership Defend Rod Rosenstein Against Impeachment Threat (USAT) 128
Steve Scalise Supports Impeachment Of Rod Rosenstein: 'Has Not Done His Job' (CALLER) 128
Nunes: Redacted Sections Of Carter Page FISAs Are 'Really Bad' For FBI (CALLER) 128
Top Iranian General Warns Trump That War Would Unravel U.S. Power In Region (WP) 129
Iran's Special Forces Chief Warns Trump: "If You Begin The War, We Will End It" – Tasnim (REU) 130
After Trump's Threat To Iran, White House Convenes A Policy Meeting (WSJ) 130
Senators Warn Europe Against Flouting US Iran Sanctions (AP) 130

LEADING DHS NEWS

Hundreds Of Migrant Children Remain In Custody, Though Most Separated Families Are Reunited At Court Deadline

By Nick Miroff And Samantha Schmidt
Washington Post, July 26, 2018

At the expiration of a court deadline to reunite migrant families separated during its "zero tolerance" border crackdown, the Trump administration said Thursday that it has delivered 1,412 children to parents detained in immigration custody, and is on track to return all of those deemed eligible for reunification.

But 711 children remain in government shelters because their parents have criminal records, their cases remain under review or the parents are no longer in the United States, officials said. The latter group includes 431 parents.

Chris Meekins, an official at the Department of Health and Human Services, which has led the reunification effort, told reporters that "hundreds of staff have worked 24-7" to meet the court's 30-day deadline. Administration officials said they would work with the court to figure out how to return the remaining children, including those whose parents have been deported.

One hundred twenty parents declined to be reunited with their children, the government said, a decision some parents make to allow their children to remain in the United States with other relatives while their immigration claims are adjudicated.

President Trump ordered an end to family separations June 20 amid public outcry and spreading criticism within his own political party, as searing accounts emerged of traumatized children and anguished parents. Within days, Judge Dana M. Sabraw of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, a Republican appointee, ordered the government to return children to their parents and imposed deadlines.

Sabraw's order set off a bureaucratic scramble across multiple federal agencies, as workers sorted through case files by hand to match children to parents and plan their reunions. He set July 26 as a deadline but allowed the government latitude to determine which parents would qualify for expedited reunions.

The judge has praised the government's progress so far as a "remarkable achievement," and Sabraw is expected to rule Friday on a motion in a class-action lawsuit — brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of migrant parents — to make the government wait at least a week before attempting to deport families that have been reunited.

"The families have had virtually no chance to talk to each other about what decision they want to make," ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said Thursday. "Those are incredibly difficult legal decisions to make for parents and children who haven't seen each other, and we believe seven days is more than reasonable."

In many cases, those families will have to decide whether to be deported together or to leave their children behind in the United States to pursue their asylum cases.

Government attorneys have told Sabraw they are proud of the round-the-clock reunification effort. But Gelernt said the government was praising itself for meeting benchmarks it set and that it would take far longer to sort out the cases of children still in government custody.

"They shouldn't be proud of work they're doing," he told reporters.

"It should just be: 'We created a cruel, inhumane unconstitutional policy. Now we're trying to fix it in every way we can and make these families whole,'" Gelernt said.

The ACLU said in court documents filed Wednesday that many migrant parents separated from their children may have unknowingly signed away their reunification rights.

Some parents said they thought they were signing paperwork that would allow them to reunite with their children, according to their lawyers. Others described being crowded into rooms with dozens of people and given only a few minutes to fill out forms that would determine whether they would reunite with their children or leave them behind in the United States. They signed the forms out of fear, confusion or a belief that they had no choice, lawyers wrote in the court filing.

"One father was told that if he didn't sign the form presented to him, then he would not see his daughter again," lawyer Kathryn Shepherd wrote in an affidavit for the court.

These testimonies, described by more than a dozen lawyers, were part of the ACLU's ongoing class-action lawsuit over the U.S. government's separation of migrant families.

[Government on track to reunite most families, but judge chides 'troubling' process]

As Thursday's court deadline approached, the Trump administration faced increased scrutiny from Sabraw over its inability to sort out how many migrant parents had already been deported or released from federal custody.

The government is seeking to resume deportations, and the administration has challenged the ACLU's motion, insisting that the migrant parents it deported gave their consent.

But Wednesday's filing paints a picture of confusion and misinformation. Gelernt accused immigration officials of distributing paperwork to migrant parents in a "coercive and misleading manner," creating a chaotic reunification process.

Many of the parents speak indigenous languages, of which there are more than two dozen in Central America. Interpreters are scarce. And even among those migrants who speak Spanish, many cannot read or write. This means that many migrants have very little understanding of the status of their asylum cases, the whereabouts of their children or their legal options.

Luis Cruz, a lawyer counseling migrant parents in Otero County Processing Center in Chaparral, N.M., described speaking with five fathers who were on the government's list of people who had relinquished their rights to reunification with their children.

"All of the five fathers wish to be reunited with their children," Cruz wrote in an affidavit as part of the ACLU's court filing. "All five said they can't read or write in Spanish or English. Each of the fathers told me that they were not given the opportunity to ask questions. . . . Each described feeling hopeless and believing that they had no alternative but to sign the form."

One broke down in tears, saying he had not spoken to his son in 25 days and was uncertain of his location.

Leah Chavla, who has been counseling reunited families at a residential center in Dilley, Tex., said it takes hours just to get basic information from families about the stages of their cases. This is in large part, Chavla says, because of the trauma these families have experienced.

Chavla described the struggle of clarifying information during an interview with a woman and her 11-year-old son.

"The boy would barely speak through the entire interview, only sometimes slightly nodding or shaking his head to answer simple — yes or no — questions," Chavla said. "He only stared forward with an intent expression that looked like he was concentrating so as to not cry. His mother repeatedly told him to speak to us, but he could not speak."

Federal Authorities Say They Have Met Deadline To Reunite Migrant Families

By Caitlin Dickerson, Annie Correal And Mitchell Ferman

New York Times, July 26, 2018

The federal government reported Thursday that it would meet a court-ordered deadline to reunite the last "eligible" migrant families separated at the Southwest border, but hundreds of children remained in federal custody as a result of a contentious immigration policy that has drawn international condemnation.

Officials with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency reunited 1,442 of the last group of children with their families and said they expected to complete all "eligible" reunifications by midnight Thursday, Pacific time.

"By the court deadline this evening, we are on track to reunite all eligible parents within ICE custody," said Chris Meekins, chief of staff at the Department of Health and Human Services.

But in a day that saw government officials and community volunteers scrambling to bring families together, multiple reports of failed reunifications raised questions about whether the deadline had in fact been met. Further confusing

the issue was a change in the way the government tallied its progress, with the latest report counting children rather than parents, a reversal from prior reports.

"The data is dynamic," a government official said of the discrepancy in a conference call with reporters.

Even if Thursday's deadline was met, the government's work to address the effects of the family separation policy was far from over. The parents who were deemed eligible for reunification represent only about a third of all those who were separated from their children after crossing the border, a practice that began last summer and escalated in May.

At least 711 other parents of children older than 5 were not cleared to recover their children this week because they failed criminal background or parental verification checks. The parents of 46 children under 5 years of age were similarly excluded.

The parents of about 431 children appeared to have been deported without them, and the government has yet to find the parents. Their futures, along with those of at least 94 other children whose parents' locations were "under case file review," according to court records, remain uncertain.

"The only deadline they are meeting is the one they have set for themselves," said Lee Gelernt, lead counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed a federal lawsuit challenging the family separations. "The government should not be getting applause for cleaning up their own mess, but moreover, they're still not meeting the deadline for all the families."

Still, it appeared that the judge handling the case, Dana M. Sabraw of the Federal District Court in San Diego, was inclined to allow the government some leeway in complying with his order to rapidly bring separated families back together.

"The parties are really working through the issues in a very measured and successful way given the enormity of the undertaking," Judge Sabraw said at a status hearing early this month.

The reunifications have unfolded in chaotic scenes across the country. Many have been concentrated in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, where families have been funneled into federal offices that were designated as "staging facilities," overwhelming local resources to the extent that some parents have had to wait days after arriving to rejoin their children.

At one such facility in South Texas, the Port Isabel Detention Center, the government has been labeling some parents as "released" while they are still in custody, according to Bethany Carson, who works for Grassroots Leadership, a nonprofit advocacy group in Austin.

Ms. Carson said that hundreds of parents were sent to Port Isabel in recent weeks. After receiving word in the middle of the night from Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials that their children had arrived, the parents quickly changed into street clothes and were broken into groups of about 70 to wait to be reconnected.

Some waited up to a week, Ms. Carson said, and were not allowed access to showers, phones or religious services, while efforts stalled to return their children.

"They're completely cut off from the outside world," she said. "And officials are saying they're free."

In some cases, parents who recovered their children were dismayed by what they found. At the airport in McAllen, Tex., a migrant mother who identified herself only as Roxana, 23, was waiting to leave with her son Eduardo, 9, who had just been returned to her after being held in New York. But the boy had a black eye and a heavy cough.

"They gave him back sick and beaten and traumatized," Roxana said.

Last-minute logistical planning to meet the deadline appeared to have led to some mistakes. Some children have been sent to the wrong facilities, according to a government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the reunification efforts.

On Tuesday, two siblings, 9 and 14, were abruptly flown from New York to be reunited with their mother in the Southwest — but the mother may have already been deported, according to the children's lawyer, Priya Konings. On Wednesday, a case worker was in "panic mode" trying to resolve the situation.

The hours and days after reunification have come with their own challenges, which have largely been absorbed by aid groups tapped by the government to provide emergency shelter and food, as well as transport. While it is not typical for the government to support migrants once they are released from federal custody, the separation policy left many families far from the border, where a long-established network of shelters and volunteer organizations have traditionally provided support.

Danielle Bernard, a spokeswoman for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, one of two organizations working with the government on family reunifications, said her group, too, was feeling the time crunch of the court order.

Ms. Bernard said that the organization's two offices coordinating efforts in Arizona and New Mexico were given only a few days to prepare to receive about 300 families each — or at least 1200 people in all.

"This has really been something completely new to all of us," Ms. Bernard said. "Usually we have weeks or months to develop programs to make sure people have the support they need. In this situation we've been given like 24 hours' notice."

After their immediate needs are met, many families have relied on donated travel miles, cellphones and money, pooled by advocates, to regain some stability. Well-established groups with powerful donor networks, such as the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal

Services, known as RAICES, and Fwd.us, an advocacy group backed by tech entrepreneurs Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates, have raised tens of millions of dollars to pay for immigration court bonds and plane tickets.

But even those efforts have been challenging. At a bus station in McAllen, Tex., families arrived from Port Isabel "starving," said Dionne Uklejaarriving, an advocate with the group Immigrant Families Together. They and other advocates were giving the reunited families pizza, along with backpacks filled with food, clothes and "travel essentials."

Amateur fund-raisers have also been crucial, such as one called Immigrant Families Together that was started by a former social worker and two theater professionals in New York. The group has helped about a dozen reunified parents and raised more than $400,000.

Julie Schwietert Collazo, the group's founder, echoed the frustration expressed by many such advocates over why the responsibility has fallen to them, rather than the government, to complete the reunifications. "You could at least make the gesture of not dropping them off at a Greyhound station," she said, "and saying 'Bye, it's been real.'"

Families that remained in custody after they were reunited have poured into three large family detention facilities, where the government can hold them for 20 days. Those are likely families for whom the government has already issued deportation orders — 900 of them, according to the latest court filings — which could be quickly executed if Judge Sabraw lifts a temporary stay on such deportations. A court hearing on that issue was scheduled for Friday evening.

Immigrant lawyers volunteering at the family detention facilities were bracing to receive dozens more families on Thursday, and expected to prepare some of them for the initial interviews needed to pursue a case for asylum, which may represent their only hope of remaining in the United States.

The government quietly began separating families along the Southwest border last summer, and ramped the practice up significantly in May after Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Justice Department would have "zero tolerance" for illegal border crossers. The practice was intended in part to deter migrant families from traveling to the United States, though the administration insisted for months that it did not have a family separation policy, and blamed Democrats and Congress for tying their hands.

Facing bitter, bipartisan condemnation of the policy, President Trump ended it with an executive order on June 20.

By that time, nearly 3,000 children had been taken from their parents. Their separations were challenged in a lawsuit by the A.C.L.U., after which Judge Sabraw ordered that the children under 5 years of age be reunited with their parents by July 10, and those ages 5 to 17 by July 26.

Judge Sabraw ordered the government to file a status report with updated figures on reunifications by late Thursday. Lawyers on both sides agree that much work remains, especially when it comes to locating the parents who appear to have been deported. Government lawyers have said the parents will not be allowed back into the country to retrieve their children, but they must be found and vetted before the children can be returned to their native countries.

The A.C.L.U. filed a motion on Wednesday to protect parents whom the government has claimed have waived their rights to immediately recover their children, citing testimony from some who said they did not know what they had agreed to because documents were not translated into their native languages, or who felt they had been forced to sign documents under duress. Most of the cases involve parents who are still in custody.

A Department of Homeland Security official disputed the accounts, saying that the agency's procedures call for the consent form to be read to parents in a language they understand, with provisions to certify that this occurred.

Plaintiffs' lawyers may also seek government support to address the psychological toll of family separation. Some children have not recognized their parents after being returned. Others continue to ask if the government is going to take them away again, said Mr. Gelernt of the A.C.L.U. "That feeling of insecurity in the children is likely to last a lifetime," he said.

An earlier version of this article misstated the date on which President Trump signed his executive order. It was June 20, not June 26.

Liz Robbins contributed reporting.

Administration: 1,820 Children Reunited After Border Split

By Elliot Spagat And Colleen Long

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

SAN DIEGO — The Trump administration said Thursday that more than 1,800 children separated at the U.S.-Mexico border have been reunited with parents and sponsors but hundreds remain apart, signaling a potentially long wait for anguished families.

The federal government was under a Thursday deadline to reunify more than 2,500 children who were separated at the border from their parents under a new immigration policy designed to deter immigrants from coming here illegally. The policy quickly backfired amid global outrage from political and religious leaders and daily headlines about crying children taken from their parents.

President Donald Trump ended the practice of taking children from parents, but a federal judge in San Diego ordered the government to reunite all the families by the end of day Thursday, but the efforts will continue. U.S. District

Judge Dana Sabraw has indicated some leeway given the enormity of the job.

As of Thursday morning, the government said it reunited 1,442 children 5 and older with their parents in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody. An additional 378 were reunited with parents in different locations around the country or given to sponsors, who are often relatives or close family members.

That leaves about 700 who remain apart, including more than 400 whose parents have been deported, officials say. Those reunions take more time, effort and paperwork as authorities fly children back to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

The Trump administration insisted it would meet the court deadline by reuniting all of the family members that it deemed eligible for reunification.

Chris Meekins, the head of the office of the assistant secretary for preparedness and response for Health and Human Services, said the government would continue to reunify families throughout the evening.

"We are on-track to reunite all eligible parents in ICE custody," Meekins said.

For the last two weeks, children have been arriving steadily at ICE locations in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico to get back with parents. Faith-based and other groups have provided meals, clothing, legal advice, plane and bus tickets and even new shoe laces, which are taken away from people in detention.

The families are generally released, and parents are typically given ankle-monitoring bracelets and court dates to appear before an immigration judge.

A charitable organization called FWD.US, founded by technology leaders including Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Dropbox founder Drew Houston was paying for the airline tickets, the bus tickets and the lodging for all the families newly reunited in the Phoenix area to get them to relatives living all over the United States, said Connie Phillips of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. She said a phone company had provided 500 mobile phones for the migrants, each with six months of free service.

There were scattered reunions in various locations on Thursday, including about 15 in Phoenix, said Phillips. The main immigrant-assistance center in El Paso, Texas, has been receiving about 25 reunified families a day.

Some children who had not seen their parents in weeks or months seemed stoic and slow to accept that they would not be abandoned again.

Lutheran Social Services support worker Julisa Zaragoza said some reunified children in Phoenix were so traumatized they were afraid to go to the bathroom by themselves, fearful their parents would be gone when they came out.

One father who was reunited last week said his young daughter did not believe that he would not leave her a second time.

Jose Dolores Munoz, 36, from El Salvador, was reunited with his 7-year-old daughter last Friday, nearly two months after they were separated. He said his daughter cries when he leaves the house because she thinks he's not coming back.

"She is afraid," Munoz said in Spanish. "Yesterday I left her crying, she is telling me, 'You are not coming back. You are lying. You are leaving me.'"

Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union who represents the separated families, said before the latest figures were announced that the government should not be congratulating itself for meeting its "self-defined" deadline.

"The government shouldn't be proud of the work they're doing on reunification," he said. "It should just be, 'We created this cruel, inhumane policy ... now we're trying to fix it in every way we can and make these families whole."

Among those who remain apart from their children is Lourdes de Leon of Guatemala. She turned herself in to authorities at the border and was deported on June 7, but her 6-year-old son, Leo, remained in the U.S.

De Leon said Guatemalan consular officials told her signing a deportation order would be the easiest way to reunite with Leo.

"He is in a shelter in New York," de Leon said. "My baby already had his hearing with a judge who signed his deportation eight days ago. But I still do not know when they are going to return him to me."

Immigration attorneys said they had advocates in Central America to help parents who were deported without their children. And Gelernt said the ACLU would go looking for all of the parents to determine whether they intentionally left without their children.

"I think it's going to be really hard detective work," he said. "And hopefully we're going to find them."

Both sides were due back in court Friday, when the judge was going to decide whether to ban deportations of families for seven days after they are reunified so that parents could have time to discuss their options.

Late last month, Sabraw ordered a nationwide halt to family separations, which President Donald Trump effectively did on his own June 20. Sabraw issued a 14- day deadline to reunite children under 5 with their parents and 30 days for children 5 and older.

Phillips said the parents and kids open up as they go through an assessment process with workers. She said the outpouring of donations has been comforting.

"We have seen a lot of people come together over this, we're seeing the best of what Americans can be," she said.

___

Long reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Anita Snow in Phoenix, Roxana Hegeman in Wichita, Kansas, Astrid Galvan in El Paso, Texas, Alan Fram in Washington and Sonia Perez D. in Guatemala City contributed to this report.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Most Children, Parents Separated At U.S.-Mexican Border Reunited: Court Filing

By Tom Hals

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

As Reunification Deadline Arrives, Fear And Uncertainty Persist For Many Migrant Families

By Molly Hennessy-Fiske

Los Angeles Times, July 26, 2018

A case worker texted lawyer Ruby Powers late Wednesday with good news: A 7-year-old Central American boy separated from his mother nearly two months ago would soon be returned.

But on Thursday, the boy was still in New York, the mother in South Texas, still waiting to be reunited like many other families separated under the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy.

"It's been a roller coaster," said Powers, a Houston lawyer who has been flying down to the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas to join a corps of lawyers representing immigrant parents pro bono. "If I hadn't helped her, given her a phone to call relentlessly, I don't know how she would manage it."

Thursday was the deadline set by a federal judge in San Diego for the government to reunite more than 2,500 children separated from their parents after crossing the border illegally. But government lawyers have already said they expect to miss the deadline, saying they have been unable to locate many parents, and hundreds of others have been deported without their children. They told the judge this week that they will have reunited about 1,600 families by day's end.

When Powers arrived at the McAllen bus station Thursday morning, she was greeted by a chaotic scene. Dozens of protesters opposing zero tolerance had marched from a nearby federal courthouse and were hefting signs at the station entrance that said "Keep families together" and "Break bread not families."

Inside the station, immigrant families released by the Department of Homeland Security had already started arriving with telltale manila envelopes labeled "Please help me I don't speak English."

Members of a group of local volunteers calling themselves Angry Tias and Abuelas (Aunts and Grandmothers) had hoped to distribute backpacks of supplies to the immigrants. The group had distributed such backpacks for days, but officials at the terminal suddenly prevented them from doing so Thursday.

By afternoon, large groups of migrants were being dropped off at the station by Catholic Charities, about 50 at a time, most with children, some toddling around in diapers.

"We never know when people are coming," said volunteer Joyce Hamilton, a retired teacher.

Many families at the terminal Thursday had not been separated because they arrived in the U.S. after President Trump issued an executive order ending the practice. (Immigrant advocates insist the practice often continues.)

"I was still scared we would be separated," said Yvette Casares, 32, who brought her three children from Honduras across the Rio Grande on Saturday with a smuggler who she said robbed them. On Thursday, they were headed to Nashville, where she has friends.

Dennis Urbina, 23, a salesman and single father, said he fled El Salvador with his 2-year-old son and namesake two months ago because of gang threats. He feared the gangs more than the family separation policy, he said, "because they were going to kill me." He was joining family in Virginia.

Bus tickets were in short supply Thursday due to the rush of parents being released, Powers said. After her client was freed from detention Tuesday, Powers bought her a $150 nonrefundable ticket to Louisiana, where she planned to meet her son, who was being housed in a shelter in New York. Powers flew down from Houston with a booster seat for the boy.

But then Powers spoke with the boy's caseworker in New York and, after some back and forth, it was decided to send the boy to Texas. Powers was waiting Thursday afternoon to hear when he would arrive before buying another ticket so mother and son could go to Louisiana.

"They said 10:30 p.m., McAllen, but I'll believe it when I get the flight confirmation," she said.

She and the mother, whom she identified by first name, Ana, due to her ongoing immigration case, have been staying at a McAllen motel. She helped Ana buy new clothes, and she threw away those she arrived in.

She's had trouble sleeping, and distracts herself with Christian music or talking to relatives by phone.

Powers extended their hotel room and delayed her return flight. She has a 7-year-old son too, and has spent the past month flying down to the valley to join what she calls a legal "relay race."

"I still have clients who are detained and fear being deported any minute. I hope people realize this is not the end of the story with the deadline today," she said.

It's difficult to determine how many separated families have truly been reunited. Lawyers at the Texas Civil Rights Project said that of the 382 families they interviewed, 73 have been reunited and released; 26 families have been reunited and detained and six families deported (half to Honduras, half to Guatemala).

Another 75 adults were still detained, and officials were trying to track down 202 adults no longer at ICE facilities who may have been deported.

"Keep in mind the hundreds of families that have not been reunited," Efren Olivares, the group's racial and economic justice program director, told a crowd of several hundred protesters outside the McAllen courthouse.

Two massive immigrant family detention centers in South Texas were packed this week. Lawyers said it's not clear why some families are released while others are detained, or whether those detained will ultimately be deported. About 900 parents were fighting deportation.

The American Civil Liberties Union has asked the federal judge in San Diego to delay those deportations to give parents time to decide how to handle their immigration cases and those of their children.

Immigrants are not entitled to lawyers in immigration court, and many don't have them, including children.

Olivares said he's also concerned that detained parents and reunited families sent to detention will be deported without having access to lawyers. Instead of considering deported parents ineligible to take custody of their children, the government should strive to reunify them with children still in the U.S., he said.

"The government keeps talking about how many families have been reunited. We should be asking how many families have not," he said, noting that at least one Honduran father separated from his children committed suicide at a South Texas jail in May. "He's never going to see his children again."

Juanita Valdez Cox, executive director of the group that organized Thursday's protest, La Union Del Pueblo Entero, said local immigrant shelters are "overloaded now that the government is trying to meet the deadline."

She said it took a herculean effort for her group to help reunite just one father and son who had been separated and sent to different states.

"I think the government thought, 'We can do this and nobody's going to care.' That's why we're here, to tell immigrants at the courthouse today that we do care and the government messed this up. They have created a crisis," she said.

The reunification efforts are even more complicated for the estimated 463 parents who were deported from the U.S. without their children.

Nazario Jacinto-Carrillo, a 32-year-old potato farmer from Guatemala, said Thursday that he still doesn't know when he'll be reunited with his 6-year-old daughter, Filemona, whom he hasn't seen since she was taken from him after they illegally crossed the California border in May.

From his village in the western highlands of Guatemala, Jacinto-Carrillo said by telephone, he keeps in contact with an attorney and Guatemalan consular officials in New York City who are trying to arrange her flight home.

He has provided copies of birth certificates of family members. The consulate, he said, has provided her a passport. Filemona also appeared at an immigration hearing in New York last week.

"I've done everything required, but there's still no explanation," Jacinto-Carrillo said. "I have no idea when I'll see my daughter again."

Times Staff Writer Richard Marosi contributed to this report from San Diego.

Feds Race To Reunify Immigrant Families Separated At Border To Meet Court-imposed Deadline

By Daniel Gonzalez

Arizona Republic, July 26, 2018

The Trump administration and the ACLU are at odds over whether the government has met Thursday's court-imposed deadline to reunify nearly 2,600 children separated from parents apprehended at the border.

Government lawyers contend they are on track to reunify more than 1,600 children with parents the government has deemed eligible for reunification by midnight.

But an ACLU attorney on Thursday blasted the Trump administration for excluding 914 parents from the list of deemed eligible for reunification, including as many as 463 parents who may have already been deported without their children, and several hundred others who may have mistakenly waived reunification either because they were pressured by the government or they didn't understand what they were doing.

"I think it's accurate to say they didn't meet the deadline. The only deadline they met was their self defined deadline," said Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project.

The latest count shows that government had reunited 1,442 of the 1,637 children deemed eligible by the government for reunification as of 6 p.m. (EST). Among those still not eligible are 711 children, who include 431 whose parents may have been deported, and 120 with parents who waived reunification.

U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw in San Diego will hold a hearing on Friday to determine whether the government met the deadline and whether to grant a motion filed by the ACLU asking for a stay blocking the government from deporting reunified families for at least seven days.

The ACLU contends the government plans to immediately deport hundreds of reunited families with final removal orders even though they have not had time to discuss legal options with their children or with lawyers, including whether to fight their deportations and seek asylum, whether to be deported together or whether to allow children to remain in the U.S. with relatives to seek asylum on their own.

"The government took these children and separated and many of the children were separated for months and months and months and now the government could at least give them seven days to figure out their options," Gelernt said.

Government lawyers are fighting the 7-day stay, arguing that parents have already had sufficient time to consider legal options, and a stay would interfere with the government's authority to enforce immigration laws.

The ACLU filed a class action lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's separation of families, which were carried out under a zero-tolerance policy aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration, including the tens of thousands of asylum-seeking families who cross the border illegally each year, mostly from poverty and violence-plagued areas of Mexico as well as the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Under the policy, immigrants entering the U.S. anywhere other than legal entry points were arrested and their children scattered to Health and Human Services centers across the country for care.

Prior to the Trump policy, immigrants caught entering at non-entry points with children had simply been sent back with the children.

The Trump administration halted the separation of families at the border on June 20 amid withering political pressure and a global outcry.

Shortly after, Sabraw ordered the Trump administration to reunify children under 5 by July 10 and all children by Thursday.

The administration missed its first deadline of reuniting the first group – children younger than 5. The government reunited 57 of the 103 "tender age" children with their parents.

Tensions Rise At Court Deadline To Reunite Migrant Families

By Ted Hesson And Renuka Rayasam
Politico, July 26, 2018

The dispute over family separations intensified Thursday as the Trump administration reached a court-ordered deadline to reunite parents and children divided at the border.

In a court filing, the Justice Department said it expected by the end of the day to reconnect all currently "eligible" migrant parents who have children ages 5 to 17.

But 711 children remained separated from their parents — enraging advocates who contend the administration hasn't made a good faith effort to undo the damage caused by President Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" border enforcement strategy. The policy, which targeted all suspected border crossers for federal prosecution, caused thousands of family separations from April to June.

Of 2,551 children identified as separated from a parent at the border, 1,442 have been reunited with a parent in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, according to the Justice Department filing.

Another 378 children were placed with parents or sponsors outside of ICE custody or reunified with parents earlier in the process, according to DOJ. Some of those children turned 18 while in custody, the filing said.

The administration said that in the cases of 20 children, further review found they were not split apart from a parent.

The list of not-yet-reunited children included minors whose parents were deemed ineligible to reconnect because of a criminal record or danger to the child. But more than half of the cases appeared to involve a parent who was "not available for discharge at this time."

A subset of 431 children had parents who were currently outside the U.S., likely because of deportations or voluntary departures. Another 79 children had a parent who had been released into the United States.

In the cases of 120 children, the administration said parents had waived reunification, a process criticized this week in written court declarations from legal service providers.

U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw in court earlier this week appeared willing to deal with possible reunification for the families outside the administration's "eligible" pool after Thursday's deadline — although how he'll proceed remains unclear.

Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which represents the plaintiffs in the class-action litigation, said Thursday that reuniting deported parents with their children would need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

The ACLU will want "every single piece of information" that the administration maintains on the deported parents to help track them down, Gelernt said.

"I don't have a magic bullet," he said during a call with reporters. "I just think it's going to be really hard detective work."

Complicating matters could be whether non-governmental organizations or administration officials will be able to work with foreign governments. In some cases, migrants intercepted at the southwest border may have intended to seek asylum based on conditions in their home countries, according to Gelernt.

A further point of contention will be whether the deported parents were offered the option to bring their child with them upon removal. An administration official told POLITICO on Wednesday that as many as 350 parents may have departed the U.S. without being given the option to take their children with them, citing a lack of documentation by DHS.

Matthew Albence, executive associate director of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations arm, said on a call with reporters Thursday that it was "long-standing ICE policy" to offer parents the chance to reunify with a child before deportation.

But Albence dodged a question about what evidence the agency maintains to prove it offered a parent the chance to reunify with their child before deportation.

He cited an ICE directive that calls for reunification "to the extent practicable," but didn't elaborate on how records are kept.

"Many parents decline this opportunity and it results in the child staying here in the country," he said.

The ICE official also praised the work by his agency — lately the target of liberal outrage — during the reunification process.

Albence said ICE "dedicated an inordinate amount of resources" to bring parents and children back together, adding that eight detention centers in the southwest were made "as family friendly as possible" as part of the process.

The fate of deported parents could hinge on how Judge Sabraw chooses to approach the issue in the coming days. The Trump administration did not classify parents outside the U.S. as part of its "eligible" pool in the run-up to the deadline, but proposed in the court filing Thursday to develop a plan to work collaboratively with plaintiffs to locate those individuals.

The parties will meet in court Friday afternoon to discuss the state of the reunification process. Another issue likely to surface will be the ACLU's request to halt deportations of migrants parents for seven days. Sabraw temporarily paused deportations of reunified parents on July 16 pending the outcome of the ACLU's request.

Albence said Thursday that 223 families presently were being held in a pair of family detention centers in South Texas.

Earlier in the day, legal service providers argued that a chaotic reunification process had made it difficult for pro bono attorneys to reach migrant parents and children.

Maria Odom, vice president of legal services at the non-profit Kids in Need of Defense, said children had been moved in the middle of the night and couldn't be located by her organization for days.

In one case, a pair of children were sent from a federal migrant shelter in New York to Texas, but their mother was already deported back to their home country before they arrived, according to the group.

Odom, who served as ombudsman of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services during the Obama administration, said KIND still didn't know the whereabouts of 30 children it represents beyond that they had been transferred out of New York.

Michelle Brané, director of migrant rights and justice at the Women's Refugee Commission, described "chaos and confusion" during visits this week to a family detention center and children's shelter in Texas.

"We saw children who were afraid to leave their parents side for even for a minute," she said of a visit to a 2,400-bed family detention center in Dilley, Texas.

Under Deadline, Government Scrambles To Reunite Migrant Families : NPR

By John Burnett

NPR, July 26, 2018

The U.S. government is racing to meet Thursday's court-ordered deadline to reunite migrant families who were separated at the border to discourage other illegal crossings. But the government has acknowledged many parents won't be able to rejoin their children. And for those parents who do get to be with their children again, the future is uncertain.

The immigration bureaucracy on the border is a world of courtrooms and jail cells, asylum officers and gray-suited guards, and rarely, disorder. But no one has seen anything quite like this: immigration officials scrambling to reassemble the same families they broke up only two months ago.

"It's a new set of rules, so the child advocates, the caseworkers, the immigration attorneys, we're all sort of figuring this out," says veteran immigration attorney Ruby Powers over a cup of coffee on her way to a detention center to see a client.

"It's like we're building a plane while we're taking off. I feel like that this whole time."

All day, unmarked white vans and chartered buses carrying the migrant children released from shelters across the country roll into the parking lot of the Port Isabel Detention Center in south Texas. It's a heavily-guarded compound on the South Texas gulf coast — just across the lagoon from tourists frolicking on Padre Island.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement says, in a statement, these "large-scale transfers of minors" present "logistical challenges." But the agency says it's working "tirelessly" to reunite eligible families by Thursday's deadline.

After they are reunited, some families are then taken together to be locked up in another detention center. Many are released on bonds. It's all happening so fast, some of their lawyers can't keep track of them

McAllen, Texas attorney Carlos Garcia says the government deserves some credit for the hustle. On Tuesday, he called a deportation officer at Port Isabel to find out when a client from Guatemala will be reunited with her daughter, who's en route from a shelter in Arizona.

He was told officials were trying to make the reunification happen within the hour. "I mean, that's awesome. Good for them," he said, "The government sure is hauling trying to get these kids back with their parents. Now, it shouldn't be occurring. The government should've never have created this chaos and we wouldn't be in this situation, but I will give them credit."

A California federal judge set today as the deadline for the Trump Administration to reunite more than 2,500 children — ages five to 17. The government said in a court filing earlier this week that as many as 1,600 parents should be back together with their children by today.

But hundreds of parents won't be — 463 parents are no longer in the U.S. Many were deported.

Lucy, a young mother from Honduras, was one of the lucky ones. Her lawyer declined to give her full name, saying she fears for her family's safety. She's back with her 6-year-old, Rudy. She's calling from her relative's house in Dallas.

"I started to cry when I saw my son," she said in Spanish. "We hugged. He gave me a big kiss and said, 'Mommy, I missed you! And I love you so much! Let's go, mommy!' He wanted us to get out of there fast."

Reunited families are housed on the shady campus of a religious shrine in the Rio Grande Valley owned by the local Catholic diocese before continuing their journey into the U.S. interior, with an ankle monitor and a promise to show up for their asylum hearings.

Unlikely to win asylum

While the family reunions are joyous, the harsh reality is that very few of these immigrants will be granted asylum, and be allowed to stay.

Under new rules adopted by the Justice Department, which runs the immigration courts, most of victims of domestic abuse and criminal gangs no longer qualify for asylum. Many Central Americans are seeking protection because they say their own governments won't help them.

At an immigration court inside Port Isabel Detention Center, Judge Robert Powell makes the final decision on asylum claims. He rejects eight out of 10 asylum claims.

In courtroom audio from earlier this month obtained by CNN, Powell said what he often says in denying an asylum claim: "the decision of the asylum officer is affirmed and your case is returned to the Department of Homeland Security for you to be removed from the United States."

On Tuesday, the last case of the day involved a man who says he fled Honduras after his mother was murdered in front of him by village thugs who had a vendetta against his family, and who vowed he was next.

Powell told the man the same thing he tells other immigrants about to be deported: "I do wish you good luck in your home country." The Honduran man laid his head in his arms, and sobbed loudly as a security guard cleared the courtroom.

Government Rushes To Meet Family-Reunification Deadline

Immigrant advocacy groups say Trump administration's efforts to bring parents, children together aren't enough

By Alicia A. Caldwell And Arian Campo-Flores

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

BORDER WALL

Speaker Says Trump Willing To Be 'Patient' For Wall Funding

By Lindsey McPherson

CQ Roll Call (DC), July 26, 2018

Speaker Paul D. Ryan suggested Thursday that President Donald Trump is willing to wait until after September to secure more funding for his border wall.

"We think we have a unified strategy to make sure we can get as many appropriations bills done as possible," the Wisconsin Republican said following a meeting he and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky had with Trump at the White House on Wednesday.

The House leader said he is hopeful that some of the 12 appropriations bills can be enacted into law before Oct. 1, the start of fiscal year 2019. But he acknowledged "there will be some bills that won't be ready or done by then and we'll have to have a CR [continuing resolution] to bridge us over until later on."

That continuing resolution is expected to include the Homeland Security Department appropriations measure that would include the border wall funding.

"It's not a question of if, it's a question of when," Ryan said of the wall funding. "The president is willing to be patient."

Ryan said he feels "very good" that Republican leaders in the House, Senate and administration are on the same page on the appropriations strategy, which includes funding the military on time.

AVIATION SECURITY

TSA Should Set Goals For Officer Training At Glynco, Ga. Academy

By Kelly Yamanouchi

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, July 26, 2018

The Transportation Security Administration should set goals and performance measures for the training of all newly-hired officers at an academy in Glynco, Ga., the U.S. Government Accountability Office recommended in a new report.

TSA centralized training of all of its new officers at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, near Brunswick, in 2016.

The move to a centralized "Basic Training" program at one location required before TSA officers deploy to airports around the country came after TSA was criticized for frequent failures to detect mock explosives and weapons during tests.

Before the shift, new hires were trained at their local airports.

The two weeks of training in Glynco includes classroom instruction, training on prohibited items and recognizing improved explosive devices, an unclassified intelligence briefing on current threats to aviation security and a simulated active shooter scenario at a checkpoint.

GAO said in the report released Thursday that the basic training, which costs an average of $2,300 per student, "serves as the foundation" for officers to learn skills and procedures "and it is important to establish goals and measures to better assess the effectiveness of the training they receive." That would help the agency determine how well officers fulfill their role of ensuring airline passenger safety, according to the congressional watchdog.

To date, more than $50 million has been obligated to set up and operate TSA officer basic training, according to the GAO report.

TSA expected that the centralized training would improve employee morale, but there are no goals or metrics related to that benefit, according to the GAO report. The agency could conduct exams on X-ray image interpretation and conduct surveys to gauge employee morale, GAO said.

Jim Crumpacker of the Department of Homeland Security, which includes TSA, agreed with the recommendation.

He wrote in a memo responding to GAO that by Oct. 31, TSA will conduct assessments during the training and surveys afterward.

The centralized academy makes it easier to respond to evolving threats with new training, Crumpacker wrote, adding that "an academy setting encourages the development of camaraderie and esprit de corps in new employees, resulting in an increased sense of belonging with greater employee satisfaction and improved performance."

JFK Airport Scanner Could Let Passengers Keep Laptops In Their Bags

By Tamar Lapin

New York Post, July 26, 2018

A new 3-D scanner being tested at New York's JFK Airport could finally allow travelers to keep laptops and liquids in their bags.

The futuristic contraption — dubbed a computed tomography (CT) scanner — went into use Wednesday at the airport's American Airlines terminal, TSA spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein said.

The state-of-the-art machine creates a 3-D image of luggage that TSA officials can rotate on a screen to see past clutter in carry-on bags and is better at detecting explosives, including liquid ones, Farbstein said Thursday.

The added visibility means people will no longer have to dredge up their MacBooks or chug their water in the security line.

"CT technology improves detection capability by more effectively detecting threats, thereby increasing overall security effectiveness," American Airlines, which partnered with the TSA to debut the machine, said in a statement. "In the future, CT could offer the opportunity for passengers to leave liquids, gels and aerosols, as well as laptops, in their carry-on bags at all times."

The TSA said it'll be installing 30 more of the machines at various airports by the end of the year.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Migrant Parents Were Misled Into Waiving Rights To Family Reunification, ACLU Tells Court

By Samantha Schmidt

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

When immigration officials asked a Guatemalan father to sign a sheet of paper in English several weeks ago, he had no idea what it said.

The man, a migrant who primarily speaks the Mayan language Akatek, knows no English, barely understands Spanish and is completely illiterate, according to an immigration lawyer. But he is clear about what he wants most — to reunite with his 8-year-old daughter, from whom he was separated at the border in May.

So the father was stunned to learn, from an attorney in a New Mexico immigration processing center, that he signed a form waiving his right to do just that.

The Guatemalan man is one of many migrant parents separated from their children who may have unknowingly

signed away their reunification rights, lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union wrote in court documents filed Wednesday.

Some parents said they thought they were signing paperwork that would, in fact, allow them to reunite with their children, according to their immigration lawyers. Others described being crowded into rooms with dozens of people, given only a few minutes to fill out forms that would determine whether they would reunite with their children or leave them behind in the United States. They signed the forms out of fear, or confusion, or a belief that they had no other choice, lawyers wrote in the court filing.

"One father was told that if he didn't sign the form presented to him, then he would not see his daughter again," lawyer Kathryn Shepherd wrote in a court affidavit.

These testimonies, described by more than a dozen lawyers, were part of a 125-page court filing from the ACLU as part of an ongoing class-action lawsuit over the U.S. government's separation of migrant families at the border.

The court filing asked U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw, of the Southern District of California, to extend the amount of time that reunited families may be allowed to remain in the United States before the government tries to deport them.

The ACLU argued that families should be given seven days after reunification to consult with attorneys and as a family about "what might be the most consequential decision of their lives" — whether to be deported together or to leave their children behind in the U.S. to pursue their asylum cases.

The Trump administration on Tuesday said it was on track to reunite the majority of separated migrant families by Thursday's court deadline. The government said it had reunited 1,012 parents with their children, out of 2,551 who were separated.

But the administration also faced scrutiny from Sabraw over its inability to sort out how many migrant parents have already been deported or released from federal custody. The Trump administration said Monday that 463 parents are no longer present in the United States, meaning they may have been deported. Lawyers for the government, however, cautioned that the number does not necessarily indicate how many parents were sent back without their children.

The Trump administration has also insisted that all of the parents it deported without their children gave their written consent. As of Tuesday, the government had counted 127 parents who opted to be deported without their children.

But Wednesday's court filing paints a picture of confusion and misinformation. Lee Gelernt, of the ACLU, accused immigration officials of distributing paperwork to migrant papers in a "coercive and misleading manner," creating a chaotic reunification process.

For this reason, the ACLU argues that it is crucial for parents to have a longer waiting time — at least a week — to discuss with attorneys before any deportations take place.

Many of the parents speak indigenous languages, of which there are hundreds throughout Latin America. Interpreters in these languages are scarce. And even among those migrants who speak Spanish, many do not know how to read or write.

"The evidence is overwhelming that parents have signed forms they did not understand," Gelernt wrote. "Parents plainly had no idea what they were signing or agreeing to orally."

This means that many migrants have very little understanding of the current status of their asylum case, the whereabouts of their children or their legal options moving forward.

Luis Cruz, a lawyer counseling with migrant parents in Otero County Processing Center in Chaparral, N.M., described speaking with five fathers who were on the government's list of people who had relinquished their rights to reunification with their children.

"All of the five fathers wish to be reunited with their children," Cruz wrote in an affidavit as part of the ACLU's court filing. "All five said they can't read or write in Spanish or English. Each of the fathers told me that they were not given the opportunity to ask questions….Each described feeling hopeless and believing that they had no alternative but to sign the form."

One broke down in tears, saying he hadn't spoken to his son in 25 days and was uncertain of his location. Another father said he did not know the status of his case, but was not aware of any final order of removal.

"In fact, he has received an order of removal which is dated June 3, 2018," Cruz wrote.

This miscommunication was compounded by the fact that many migrant families arrive in the U.S. with very little prior documentation. This creates chaos — and major delays — as lawyers try to piece together case files.

Even lawyers working with recently reunified families struggle to sort through cases.

"Mothers and children are profoundly confused," wrote lawyer Shalyn Fluharty. "Mothers are unable to confirm whether they spoke with an asylum officer, or immigration judge."

Leah Chavla, who has been counseling reunited families at a residential center in Dilley, Texas, said it takes hours just to get basic information from families about the stages of their cases. This is in large part, Chavla says, because of the trauma these families have experienced.

Chavla described the struggle of clarifying information during an interview with a mother and her 11-year-old son.

"The boy would barely speak through the entire interview, only sometimes slightly nodding or shaking his head to answer simple — yes or no — questions," Chavla said. "He only stared forward with an intent expression that

looked like he was concentrating so as to not cry. His mother repeatedly told him to speak to us, but he could not speak."

Manoj Govindaiah, the director of family detention services at the immigrant services group RAICES, said these experiences have "inculcated families with skepticism and distrust to a level that far exceeds any that I have previously experienced with our clients."

Govindaiah recalled how one father asked him repeatedly for proof that he was in fact an immigration lawyer. When Govindaiah later asked the man why he was so distrustful of him at first, the father responded that he has been lied to ever since he entered the country. The father said "he doesn't know who is government and who isn't, and now that he has his son back, he will not let his son go anywhere without him."

The meeting ended without reaching much of a meaningful discussion about the father's legal options, Govindaiah said. The man simply "could not move past his fear of re-separation."

The father's repeated response, Govindaiah said, was "but as long as I'm with my son, I'll be ok. I'll be with my son that whole time, right?"

Family Separation Crisis Continues On Border Even As Court-ordered Deadline Nears

By Jazmine Ulloa

Los Angeles Times, July 25, 2018

The calls for help started coming in to immigration lawyers across the country just before Memorial Day. Immigrant detainees, many fleeing gangs and violence and seeking legal asylum in the U.S., were flooding courtrooms along the Southwest border.

Dozens were parents reporting that Border Patrol agents had taken away their children, and many were under the impression they would see their sons and daughters again within hours.

"We had to break the news to them that that wasn't true," said Efrén C. Olivares, who was among the attorneys with the Texas Civil Rights Project to come to the aid of public defenders in McAllen. "And then the question became, 'If not today, then when?'

"We didn't have an answer to that."

Nine weeks of chaos and confusion later, many still don't.

Under an order issued by U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw in San Diego, Thursday is supposed to be the deadline for reuniting the more than 2,500 children who were taken from parents apprehended while crossing the border.

Government lawyers have conceded they will fail to reunite all the families by that deadline — hundreds of parents already have been deported without their children, and the government has been unable to locate many others. Officials said in court Tuesday they expected to have reunited just over 1,600 families by the deadline.

Despite the administration's professed "zero tolerance" policy, hundreds of those families have been released on immigration parole, pending hearings on their asylum claims, typically with the adults wearing ankle monitors. Scores of other families, however, have been sent to immigration detention centers, including two in Texas where at least 80 families are being held in custody.

Why some families have been released and others detained remains unclear, as is how long those detentions may last, according to lawyers for the families. Government officials have refused to provide answers. A federal court settlement dating to the 1990s generally limits the lockup of children in immigrant detention centers to 20 days.

As of Wednesday, the government was still working to reunite more than 1,500 parents with children. About 900 parents were fighting final deportation orders. American Civil Liberties Union lawyers have asked Sabraw to delay those deportations to give the parents more time to decide whether to leave the country with their children or separate from them and have the children continue to press for asylum claims of their own.

Government lawyers say about 130 parents voluntarily left their children behind. But in affidavits filed Wednesday, lawyers said some parents believed they were signing forms to release their children to relatives in the U.S. Others were coerced or frightened, and many were given documents they could not read, the lawyers have said. Some of the families primarily speak indigenous languages and are not literate in Spanish or English.

More than 450 parents already have probably been deported without their children, government lawyers told Sabraw this week. The precise number, perhaps 463, remains "under review," they said. An additional 64 were deemed ineligible to be reunited with children because they had criminal records or other reasons that government officials said made them unfit.

At least 217 parents were released into the U.S. without their children, government lawyers said. Both the government and volunteer lawyers for the ACLU are trying to locate them in efforts to reunite the families.

The continued confusion, Sabraw said in court this week, was the "unfortunate" result of a policy adopted "without forethought to reunification or keeping track of people."

Along the Southwest border, immigration lawyers have described a reunification process as chaotic and scurried as the separations themselves. With family reunions often taking place in the parking lots of detention centers, activist groups have flooded the Texas border to provide help to exhausted, traumatized parents and children.

Annunciation House in El Paso has assembled hospitality centers with beds, meals, showers and a change of clothing for families. So far, it has helped 250 families who were released from detention after being reunified, the group said in a statement.

In the Rio Grande Valley, to the southeast, Catholic Charities had taken in another 100 families on Wednesday, and hundreds of volunteers were cooking meals and soliciting food donations.

"We are providing them a place to be with their children … making sure they have a safe space, a tranquil space," said Brenda Riojas, the charity's spokeswoman.

Money raised from private donors and congressional organizations, faith groups and nonprofits under the Families Belong Together coalition has allowed advocates to purchase airline and bus tickets to help parents travel to the homes of relatives or friends across the country.

Lawyers groups, such as the American Immigration Council, have been taking donations to provide counsel to parents seeking asylum or other forms of immigration relief. But ensuring families have access and can connect with lawyers has been trying.

A little before noon Wednesday, Jaqueline Aranda Osorno, an attorney at Public Counsel in Los Angeles, got word that her client, a Guatemalan father, had reunited with his 13-year-old daughter. From her home, Aranda coordinated with volunteers in McAllen to get the pair out of town.

Buses destined for a Texas town where a sponsor family waited for them were sold out. A local church was already packed with recently reunited parents and children. Multiple families were sharing rooms.

"It's been incredibly hard to figure out how to get this family out," Aranda said.

Other advocates said they hadn't been allowed on the grounds of some shelters, hurting their access to families. "Some are told to report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement in a week but may not understand what to do to avoid being detained again," said Bethany Carson, an organizer with Grassroots Leadership in Austin, Texas.

Hundreds more children remain in the hands of the government — and as many as 37 have not been matched with a parent. Congressional Democrats, immigrant rights advocates and lawyers continue to clamor for answers about what's next for the separated families and other migrant children.

"We are going to continue to ask the questions," said Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee. "We are going to continue to track where parents are and where children are, and we are not going to let it go until every child is reunited."

Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions announced the "zero tolerance" policy at the border in April. It took effect in early May. Under the policy, all adults who crossed into the country illegally were prosecuted for illegal entry. That offense is a misdemeanor, and in nearly all cases, the immigrants were sentenced to time served, but the fact that they were taken into custody provided legal justification for the government to take children away from their parents.

With parents moved into the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service, federal officials shuffled children into tent camps or more than 100 shelters nationwide.

Pentagon officials said the military has been directed to build more tent camps at two bases in Texas to temporarily house migrants.

On June 20, with pictures of children behind fences generating an international outcry, President Trump suspended the separations through executive order. Sabraw subsequently required the government to reunite children younger than 5 with their parents within 14 days, and older children by this week.

At least 57 children under 5 and more than 1,185 older children have since been reunited with families under the court order. Nearly 500 more were reunited within hours by Border Patrol agents in June.

Administration officials first floated the idea of separating migrant families at the border as a form of deterrence as early as March 2017. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen initially denied the existence of a family separation policy, then denied that Trump ordered it as a deterrent.

She and Sessions since have defended the decision to prosecute anyone who is caught crossing the border between legal ports of entry. Asked last week whether she had been notified of the family separation policy ahead of time, she said her answer was "yes and no."

"We had always done this at DHS. In other words, we had always enforced the law. The last administration enforced the law, which means they enforced the law against families," she told an audience at the Aspen Institute. Before May, however, most families with asylum claims were released pending a hearing, and few were prosecuted for illegal entry.

Through letters and private briefings, members of Congress have continued to press federal officials on how the family separation policy was crafted and rolled out, including details on the budgets and coordination among agencies under the departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services and Justice.

The response from agencies and Trump administration officials has ranged from mixed messages to silence. In the latest briefing on Wednesday, members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus said Nielsen had expressed confidence the government was on pace to meet the deadline.

But members said Nielsen and other federal officials' accounts often conflicted with what constituents are seeing.

In some cases, they said, parents in detention are being charged for phone calls to their children or can see them for only an hour a day.

Court declarations, a scathing report from attorneys and records from at least five lawsuits against federal agencies have given glimpses into the treatment of children and families in immigration custody.

At one Customs and Border Protection facility in El Centro, Calif., families with children as young as 3 were sleeping on cold, concrete floors with no padding, according to the case filings. Detainees, including juveniles, were not given adequate access to drinking water and basic hygiene products.

The cases have prompted support from doctors, psychiatrists and pediatricians.

Members of the American College of Physicians have called for congressional oversight on the health effects of family detention on children.

"We have two main concerns," said Matt Adams, legal director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, which is representing more than 60 parents, grandparents and other relatives separated from children at the border. "Will the government meet its deadline? Are families going to be locked up or treated with dignity?"

Times staff writer Ulloa reported from Washington and San Diego Union-Tribune staff writer Davis reported from San Diego. Times staff writers Molly Hennessey-Fiske in Roma, Texas, and Cindy Carcamo in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

DHS Watchdog To Investigate Border Family Separations

By Tal Kopan

CNN International, July 26, 2018

Washington (CNN)The Department of Homeland Security's watchdog will investigate its practices regarding families that were separated on the border, the inspector general confirmed to members of Congress Thursday.

The DHS inspector general had already been investigating reports of family separations, as CNN reported in April. But that investigation was opened before the department's "zero tolerance" policy that meant separating thousands of families to prosecute the parents had been established and made public.

The investigation was confirmed in a letter to more than 120 House Democrats who had requested an investigation into how DHS kept records of the thousands of families it separated at the border. As the government has hurried to comply with a court order to reunite separated families by Thursday, it has had trouble even matching the children in Health and Human Services' custody with parents who may be in DHS custody. It prompted Judge Dana Sabraw to note that the government seemed to have better record-keeping for property than people.

The IG's investigation will be broader, though, the letter said.

"We have received multiple congressional requests for reviews in this area. We are broadly reviewing issues regarding the separation of families, conditions of U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities where minors are detained, and other issues of congressional interest," acting Inspector General John V. Kelly said in the letter.

The HHS inspector general and Government Accountability Office also have opened investigations

into the issue. Kelly said his office intends to coordinate with the HHS IG, but is not currently planning to issue a joint report.

Dems Call For Investigation Into DOJ's Role In Family Separation Policy

By Lydia Wheeler

The Hill, July 26, 2018

Senate Democrats are calling on Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael Horowitz to investigate the agency's role in separating families at the southern border.

Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) led the letter, signed by 30 of his colleagues, including independent Sens. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Angus King (Maine), and sent to Horowitz on Thursday.

"The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General are conducting reviews of the zero-tolerance policy, and the Department of Justice should also face scrutiny for its integral role in initiating and executing the zero-tolerance policy," the letter says.

"Therefore we urge you to immediately launch an investigation of the Department's role in this humanitarian crisis."

The senators expressed concern about Attorney General Jeff Sessions' call for U.S. Attorney's offices to immediately adopt the policy and request additional resources if needed.

"The American people deserve an accounting of these resources and an examination of the public-safety and budgetary impact of the zero-tolerance policy," they said. "For example, resources were reportedly diverted from federal drug-smuggling cases to handle immigration charges under the zero-tolerance policy."

The letter comes the day of a court-ordered deadline for the administration to reunite all eligible families. A federal district court judge said earlier this week that the administration is on track to meet the deadline.

Central America Demands Information On Still-Separated Migrant Children

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

GOP-led House Committee Rebuffs Trump Administration On Immigrant Asylum Claim Policy

By Seung Min Kim

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

A GOP-led House committee delivered a rebuke of the Trump administration's immigration policies this week — an unusual bipartisan move that may ultimately spell trouble for must-pass spending measures later this year.

The powerful House Appropriations Committee passed a measure that would essentially reverse Attorney General Jeff Sessions's guidance earlier this year that immigrants will not generally be allowed to use claims of domestic or gang violence to qualify for asylum. The provision was adopted as part of a larger spending bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security, an already contentious measure because of disputes over funding for President Trump's border wall.

But one influential Senate Republican and ally of the White House warned that keeping the asylum provision could sink the must-pass funding bill, and other conservatives who support a tougher line on immigration began denouncing it Thursday.

"Why is @HouseAppropsGOP voting to undermine AG Sessions's asylum reforms & throw open our borders to fraud & crime?" tweeted Sen. Tom Cotton (Ark.), who often has Trump's ear on key issues. "The amendment they adopted [Wednesday] is the kind of thing that will kill the DHS spending bill."

The amendment, written by Rep. David E. Price (D-N.C.), would bar funding from government efforts to carry out Sessions's asylum directive. It passed the committee unanimously.

Sessions laid out guidance last month that said victims of domestic abuse and gang violence that is "perpetrated by non-governmental actors" will generally not be allowed to obtain asylum in the United States, an effort he said was meant to cut down on fraud.

But Democrats and immigrant rights advocates have criticized Sessions's move, warning that it would disqualify tens of thousands of immigrants fleeing violence in their home countries. His decision came as the administration was implementing a "zero-tolerance" policy that subjected everyone who crossed the border illegally to criminal prosecution, causing migrant parents to be separated from their children.

One senior Republican official said it was unlikely that the provision would stay intact once the House and Senate merge their spending measures, adding that "not every vote taken is to make law, but to move the process forward."

With their respective bills for DHS funding, the two chambers are already headed for a clash over border wall spending, with the House allocating about $5 billion for it, while the Senate sets aside $1.6 billion.

Still, both advocates and opponents of more generous immigration policies were surprised at the committee's move to approve the asylum measure unanimously.

"I think there was a general impression that things like that, that would undermine what the administration's policies are, would be partisan fights and partisan battles," said Josh Breisblatt, a senior policy analyst for the American Immigration Council.

Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), who leads the panel overseeing DHS funding, spoke in favor of the Democratic-sponsored provision, saying: "As a son of a social worker, I have great compassion for those victims of domestic violence anywhere, especially as it concerns those nations that turn a blind eye to crimes of domestic violence."

Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, noted that Yoder flew on Air Force One just this week and that Trump had already singled out Yoder for praise on Twitter, thanking him for securing the $5 billion in wall money in the DHS spending measure.

"He got the funding for the wall in there, and the president endorsed him, and he approved this amendment and spoke in favor of it," Krikorian said. "That basically makes the wall not all that useful, at least for immigration purposes."

U.S. Must Face Multistate Lawsuit Over Census Citizenship Question

By Brendan Pierson

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Trump's Victory Lap Over Citizenship Question Could Sink 2020 Census Effort

Judge rules lawsuit can proceed, dings president for role in adding question

By Stephen Dinan

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Asking about citizenship on the 2020 census is legal — but the Trump administration may still have broken the law in how it went about adding the question to the list, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

Judge Jesse M. Furman ruled that a legal challenge to the citizenship question can proceed, giving the challengers a

chance to try to prove that President Trump's team acted with "animus" toward racial or ethnic minorities in making the decision.

Judge Furman said he already sees "indications" of such animus, based on the way the government cut corners to put the citizenship question on the list for 2020.

The judge said he was particularly troubled by the Trump campaign's move to take credit for the decision to ask the question, crediting the president with "officially" mandating its inclusion.

"Courts have a critical role to play in reviewing the conduct of the political branches to ensure that the census is conducted in a manner consistent with the Constitution and applicable law," the judge wrote.

The citizenship question was asked on the decennial census up through 1950, and still appears in more limited Census Bureau surveys.

But when the Trump administration moved earlier this year to reinstate it to the full census that goes to every household, immigrant-rights, voting-rights and Democratic activists objected.

They predicted immigrants and racial or ethnic minorities may refuse to participate in the census, fearing what might happen to their information. That would lead to a skewed count, which would deny some areas money and voting power they should rightly have if everyone was properly counted, the administration's opponents said.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who oversees the Census Bureau, originally said he added the question at the behest of the Justice Department, which said the question could help it better enforce voting-rights violations.

But more recent documents show Mr. Ross had considered adding the question even before the Justice Department request, raising concerns over his motivation.

Judge Furman said there's no doubt a citizenship question is legal and Mr. Ross "had the power" to add it. But he said if the government added it with suspect motives, that could make the question illegal.

New York Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood, who is leading the case for a coalition of Democratic state attorneys general, called the ruling "a big win."

"The Trump administration's plan to demand citizenship status as part of the Census is unlawful — and it would potentially cause a huge undercount that would threaten billions in federal funds and New York's fair representation in Congress and the Electoral College," she said.

Citing Trump Attacks On Immigrants, Judge Allows Suit Over Census Question

By Michael Wines

New York Times, July 26, 2018

A federal judge on Thursday gave the green light to a lawsuit seeking to block the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 census, saying plaintiffs had made a plausible case that the move was a deliberate attempt by the White House to discriminate against immigrants.

The ruling, by United States District Judge Jesse M. Furman in Manhattan, set the stage for a trial this fall that is expected to delve into how and why the Trump administration decided in March to add a question to the next census about citizenship status.

The plaintiffs, which include state and local governments and advocacy groups, claim that asking residents to verify their citizenship would "fatally undermine" the accuracy of the head count because both legal and undocumented immigrants would refuse to fill out the form.

A reduced count in areas with large immigrant populations could reduce Democratic representation when new state and congressional districts are drawn in 2021, and skew the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal grants and other spending.

Judge Furman rejected a claim that Commerce Secretary Wilbur L. Ross Jr., who made the decision to add the question to the census form, lacked the authority to do so. But the judge said the circumstances surrounding Mr. Ross's actions, including his shifting explanation of what he did and why, raised questions about his true intent.

Mr. Ross originally said he acted at the request of the Justice Department, which he said needed better citizenship data to enforce the 1965 Voting Rights Act. But he later admitted — and Commerce Department documents confirmed — that he had discussed the citizenship question with administration officials from almost the beginning of his tenure in the department, and that he or his aides had asked the Justice Department to request that the question be added.

That alone does not prove that adding the question was intended to discriminate against immigrants, Judge Furman stated, but the sequence of events does raise suspicions.

Judge Furman added that those suspicions were bolstered by President Trump's "racially charged" statements singling out immigrant minorities. Among them, he wrote, were Mr. Trump's reference in January to "these people from shithole countries" who come to the United States; his claim in February that some immigrants "turn out to be horrendous" and are not "the best people;" and his statement in May that certain people trying to enter the United States "aren't people, these are animals."

While none of those statements refer directly to the citizenship question, the judge wrote, indications that Mr. Trump may have been personally involved in the deliberations over the question "help to nudge" the plaintiffs' claim of intentional discrimination "across the line from conceivable to plausible."

Two days after Mr. Ross announced the decision to add the citizenship question, Mr. Trump's re-election campaign declared in an email to supporters that "President Trump has officially mandated that the 2020 United States census ask people living in America whether or not they are citizens."

Commerce Department documents disclosed in the lawsuit also show that Mr. Trump's chief strategist at the time, Stephen K. Bannon, was in contact with Mr. Ross on census issues in early 2017 and directed an advocate of the citizenship question to speak with him.

Judge Allows Lawsuit Against Trump's Census Citizenship Question To Proceed

By Lydia Wheeler

The Hill, July 26, 2018

A federal district court judge on Thursday denied a request from the Trump administration to dismiss a lawsuit challenging its decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census.

Judge Jesse Furman on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York said the challengers had plausibly alleged Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross's decision to reinstate the citizenship question was motivated at least in part by "discriminatory animus" and will result in a discriminatory effect.

He also ruled that challengers had "plausibly" alleged there is a "heightened risk in the current political climate" that the question will lead to a lower response rate "because of President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric."

New York and 16 other blue states filed a lawsuit in April, challenging the constitutionality of a question about citizenship status, arguing the question will lead to a skewed count.

The New York Immigration Coalition, Casa De Maryland, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, ADC Research Institute and Make the Road New York also sued, and the cases were consolidated.

In his ruling Wednesday in the two cases, Furman said evidence shows the administration departed from the "normal procedural sequence" in adding the question, including overruling career staff who strongly objected to it, failing to extensively test the reintroduction of the question and ignoring the recommendation of the advisory committee.

The question about citizenship status has not appeared on the centennial data collection form since 1950.

Ross announced in March that he was granting a request from the Department of Justice (DOJ) to reinstate the citizenship question to help the agency better enforce the Voting Rights Act. The decision led to flurry of lawsuits in courts across the country.

The results of the census are used to redraw House districts, and the number of House seats each state receives also plays a part in determining each state's number of electoral votes.

Given the administration's push to reduce the number of immigrants, Democrats and civil rights advocates say the question would likely keep people in immigrant communities from responding, potentially lowering an area's official population count.

But Furman said it now appears it was Ross, not DOJ, that pushed for the question.

"In his memorandum, Secretary Ross stated that he 'set out to take a hard look' at adding the citizenship question 'following receipt' of a request from the Department of Justice on December 12, 2017," he wrote.

"Yet in a June 21, 2018 supplement to the Administrative Record, Secretary Ross admitted that he 'began considering' whether to add the citizenship question 'soon after' his appointment as Secretary in February 2017 — almost ten months before the 'request' from DOJ — and that, 'as part of that deliberative process,' he and his staff asked the Department of Justice if it 'would support, and if so would request, inclusion of a citizenship question.'"

Though Furman said that doesn't necessarily mean Ross added the question to discriminate against immigrant communities, he said "it may be quite persuasive."

The challengers argue that Trump's discriminatory comments toward immigrants are proof of discriminatory intent. Though Furman noted Trump's remarks weren't related specifically to the citizenship question, he said the challengers have "plausibly" claimed that Trump was personally involved in the decisionmaking.

While Furman ruled the challengers' case can proceed under their claims that the question violated the Due Process Clause of the Constitution and the Administrative Procedure Act, he dismissed their claim that Ross had violated the Enumeration Clause of the Constitution. The clause calls for an actual count of the population every 10 years.

Furman said the court "is compelled to conclude that the citizenship question is a permissible — but by no means mandated — exercise of the broad power granted to Congress and, in turn, the Secretary" under the Enumeration Clause.

He based his decision in part on the fact that there's a longstanding, historical practice of using the census for more than a mere headcount.

Furman noted that during the 19th century the census asked about occupation, the value of real estate owned and whether members of a household were "deaf," "dumb" or "blind."

"By itself, the foregoing history makes it difficult to maintain that asking about citizenship on the census would constitute a violation of the Enumeration Clause," he said. "Taking that position becomes untenable altogether in light of

the undeniable fact that citizenship status has been a subject of the census for most of the last two hundred years."

Furman warned that his decision to let the case proceed does not mean the challengers will ultimately prevail.

"As noted, the Enumeration Clause and the Census Act grant [Ross] broad authority over the census, and plaintiffs may not ultimately be able to prove that he exercised that authority in an unlawful manner," he said.

"Put another way, the question at this stage of the proceedings is not whether the evidence supports plaintiffs' claims, but rather whether plaintiffs may proceed with discovery and, ultimately, to summary judgment or trial on their claims."

New York Attorney General Barbara Underwood (D) called the court's decision a big win for New Yorkers.

"As we've argued, the Trump administration's plan to demand citizenship status as part of the Census is unlawful — and it would potentially cause a huge undercount that would threaten billions in federal funds and New York's fair representation in Congress and the Electoral College," she said.

A spokesperson for the Commerce Department said the agency is pleased the court found that Ross has broad authority over the Census.

"We are confident that this includes the authority to reinstate a citizenship question and that Plaintiffs' remaining claims will be dismissed after discovery shows that the Secretary lawfully exercised his discretion to do so," they said. "The Secretary's and the Census Bureau's priority remains conducting a complete and accurate 2020 Census."

DOJ spokesman Devin O'Malley said the department looks forward to continuing its defense of the citizenship question's reinstatement.

ACLU Sues N.J. Schools That Prevent Immigrant Children From Enrolling

By Jan Hefler

Philadelphia Inquirer, July 26, 2018

The ACLU of New Jersey is suing a dozen school districts in the state, including three in Camden County, saying they have discriminatory policies that prevent immigrant children from potentially getting an education.

The 12 school districts require parents to provide a New Jersey driver's license or other state-issued forms of identification that undocumented immigrants likely would not possess, in violation of both the state and federal constitutions, the ACLU says in its suit filed Thursday. Under current laws and policies, schools may only request proof of a child's age, residence, and immunization record when registering them for classes, the ACLU says.

"New Jersey's state Constitution calls for free public education, and that applies to every single child – no exceptions," ACLU-NJ staff attorney Elyla Huertas said in a statement. "In a state where one in five residents is foreign-born, at a time when our president has made the exclusion of immigrants a key part of his policy agenda, it's more important than ever for every school district in New Jersey to meet its obligations, both to New Jersey's families and to the Constitution."

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that had denied undocumented immigrant children an education in the public school system. After a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of Mexican school-age children who lived in Texas, the high court ruled that the law had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. In a landmark ruling, the high court held that "education has a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of our society" and that it "provides the basic tools by which individuals might lead economically productive lives to the benefit of us all."

The lawsuits were filed in state Superior Court in the individual counties where the districts are located, one month after thousands demonstrated in Washington to protest the Trump administration's immigration policies and separation of undocumented children from their parents at the Mexican border. The protest was organized by the American Civil Liberties Union and several other civil rights organizations.

Three of the 12 school districts that the New Jersey affiliate is suing are in Camden County: Bellmawr, Sterling Regional High School, and Winslow. Dan Long, an attorney who represents the Bellmawr and Winslow Township school districts, said they are "currently reviewing the lawsuits and have no further comment at this time."

Officials with the Sterling Regional High School district in Somerdale did not respond to calls for comment.

Sterling and Bellmawr were among the districts previously cited by ACLU-NJ for violations in 2014.

The lawsuits filed Thursday ask the court to order the 12 school districts to rescind the restrictive enrollment requirements and to pay legal fees.

The ACLU said it selected the 12 districts because they had the most restrictive policies among the more than 500 school districts across the state that were surveyed.

Over the last decade, the ACLU-NJ has conducted audits of school districts to determine whether they had restrictive policies, and in the last four years it sued 13 districts that the ACLU said were in violation of the law. All of the cases settled after the districts agreed to change their policies, the ACLU said.

The policies "add up to a quiet, daily injustice that allows discrimination to metastasize and that tells families, incorrectly and unconstitutionally, that they can't access the fundamental rights they're entitled to," said ACLU-NJ executive director Amol Sinha. "Public schools exist to educate all of a community's children."

Children Lead Sit-in At Senate Building In Protest Of Trump's Family Separation Policy

By Marissa J. Lang

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

In the middle of a sit-in at the Hart Senate Office Building, protesters began to make demands.

They wanted crayons. A snack. That action figure that turns into another action figure.

On Thursday, it was the children who led the charge.

About 100 people, many of them very young, marched, toddled and, in some cases, were carried from St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Southeast Washington to the building where about 50 senators have offices.

When they arrived, they gathered in a circle, hoisting signs that declared, "I AM A CHILD." They sang songs that riffed on familiar nursery rhymes — "If you're powerful and you know it, clap your hands" — and cheered, stomped and danced.

Thursday was the Trump administration's court-imposed deadline to reunite thousands of children and parents separated by immigration agents at the U.S.-Mexico border. Those younger than 5 were supposed to be returned to their families earlier this month, although the administration did not reunite all of them by the court-assigned date.

Hundreds of children whose parents have been deemed "ineligible" by the government will remain separated, including those whose parents were deported without them.

Sarah Sweeney, 11, left, and Niamh O'Donovan, 11, both from the District, make signs at St. Mark's Episcopal Church as people gather ahead of a protest before marching to the Hart Senate Office Building on Thursday. (Salwan Georges/The Washington Post)

The government was expected to update a federal judge on its progress by the end of the day Thursday.

Protest organizers said they wanted to bring children front and center so lawmakers could see the kinds of kids the president's "zero tolerance" policy has affected.

"This is what a 2-month-old looks like," said Jenn Kauffman, 38, gesturing to the wide-eyed baby affixed to her chest. "He's still breast-feeding. He depends on me for nourishment, for everything. I don't know what either of us would do if we were separated."

Parents at the rally said they wanted to show their children what it means to stand up for others in the face of injustice.

"Do you remember what we talked about, what it means to be here at this protest?" Margo Simon, 41, prompted her son.

The children draw the attention of Senate staff members. (Salwan Georges/The Washington Post)

Children hold signs that read, "I AM A CHILD." (Salwan Georges/The Washington Post)

"It means equal rights," said Indy, 4, pumping his fist into the air.

Nearby, a 3-year-old girl flashed a metallic red cape emblazoned with the Wonder Woman symbol.

"When I told her we were going to go to protest and try to help those children, she said, 'If we're going to be superheroes, I need my cape,' " said Diana Raverlie, 44, of Arlington.

Sen. Kamala D. Harris (D-Calif.) asked the children to show her drawings they had made of their families and the messages they had written.

Suri Baez, 7, had drawn two hearts — one broken and one intact. The broken one is for families who were separated, she told Harris. Their hearts will be whole again when they find their way back together.

"Oh, that's fantastic," Harris said, crouching down to look up at the girl. "So there was a broken heart and now there's a good, solid heart."

Suri nodded.

"It is the ultimate act of inhumanity to rip those children from those parents. And to do it for what? For the sake of so-called deterrence?" Harris told the crowd. "It is important that we all stand up and say, 'We as a country are better than this.' "

The protest, organized by a coalition of groups calling themselves Families Belong Together, echoed a demonstration at the same building in late June in which nearly 600 protesters were arrested.

[575 arrested as hundreds of women rally in D.C. to protest Trump's immigration policy]

By the time Capitol Police issued warnings to disperse Thursday, the children had drawn the attention of Senate staff and tour group members, who gathered at windows and craned their heads to watch.

Children and others march to the Hart Senate Office Building on Thursday. (Salwan Georges/The Washington Post)

"We don't want to arrest anyone who doesn't want to be arrested today," an officer told one of the organizers as parents helped children tuck their signs away.

Suri was there with her two siblings, Roberto, 12, and Luna, 14. For the three siblings, who came to D.C. from Denver to participate in the march, the memory of their mother, Jeanette Vizguerra, being removed from their home was still fresh.

Vizguerra, 46, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico City who has lived in the United States for 21 years, was detained last year for 86 days.

Immigration officials picked her up for violations that included driving without a valid license and crossing the border illegally, she said. Her children are U.S. citizens.

"I feel like it's kind of similar, us being without our mom and those kids being without theirs — it's cruel and

inhumane," Ricardo said. "I know I'm not going through the same pain that those kids [at the border] are, but I wanted to be here so I could feel like maybe we're helping them."

ICE Jail Contract Protest Interrupts County Board Meeting

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Officials in western Michigan were forced to temporarily suspend another meeting due to protests over an Immigration and Customs Enforcement contract that allows people to be detained at the county jail.

Kent County Commissioners stopped their meeting for about 30 minutes Thursday in Grand Rapids after protesters began to chant. No arrests were made. Another meeting also was suspended last month.

Commissioners said in a letter Wednesday that the board had no direct oversight or control over the contract which was entered into by the county sheriff.

The contract was signed in 2012 and renewed in 2017. It allows the Kent County Jail to charge ICE for each day it holds a person with a detainment request. Detainees can be held for up to three days.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

ICE Arrests Man In James City County As Part Of Statewide Crackdown

Williamsburg Yorktown (VA) Daily, July 26, 2018

JAMES CITY — Federal immigration authorities arrested 132 people — including a man in James City County and four in Newport News — earlier this month as part of an 11-day crackdown in Virginia and Washington.

The man in James City County, a South African national, was arrested on civil immigration violations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Carissa Cutrell said. He also has pending charges for assault and battery.

Cutrell declined to identify the man, stating that the "individuals were arrested on civil immigration violations so they are afforded certain privacy protections."

The man has been issued a notice to appear before an immigration judge, whose court is overseen by the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review, and will be processed for removal from the country, Cutrell said.

The arrest came during ICE's Operation Eagle's Shield, which targeted "notable threats to public safety" throughout Virginia and Washington, according to an ICE news release.

The operation targeted "violent offenders" such as MS-13 gang members and sex offenders, the release said. It was conducted by the Washington field office of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations between July 9 and 20.

The 131 men and one woman arrested in the crackdown were from nations including Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa and Sudan.

Four men were arrested in Newport News. Two of them, both from Guatemala, illegally re-entered the United States after a previous removal, Cutrell said. They face up to 20 years in prison and will be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A third Guatemalan man located in Newport News was a fugitive from a final order of removal from a federal immigration judge.

The fourth man arrested in Newport News is a Mexican national who was previously convicted on two charges of petty larceny.

ICE did not report any arrests in York County or Williamsburg during the operation.

Nine of the immigrants have already been deported, ICE said.

"We set out to locate and detain known, dangerous criminal aliens who are hiding and operating in the neighborhoods we call home," said Russell Hott, director for the Enforcement and Removal Operations' field office in Washington. "Today's announcement is the result of the absolutely essential work our ICE officers perform to identify the worst of the worst and ensure they have no refuge here."

The Department of Homeland Security and the FBI shared information with ICE for the operation.

Other organizations that provided support during Operation Eagle's Shield include ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the U.S. Marshals Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

ICE Quest For Detention Sites Puts Trump County On Tightrope

By Adam Geller

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

GOSHEN, Indiana — The sermon had been preached, the last prayers offered. Now, Mike Yoder decided, the time had come to share unsettling news.

As congregants at Silverwood Mennonite Church chatted around a Sunday potluck spread, Yoder, a county commissioner for 13 years and a dairy farmer for much longer, huddled with Pastor Jeremy Shue at the edge of the hall. There was a very good chance, Yoder confided, that the

nation's newest immigration detention center would soon rise from a soybean field north of town.

"One of the only positives is that it would be less of a drive to protest," Shue said.

Yoder needed no reminder of the potential for conflict. The Republican had paid close attention when nearly two-thirds of Elkhart County's voters backed Donald Trump for president after a campaign in which he lambasted immigrants. He knew just as well that the politically mixed county seat and the largest local employers had made a place for thousands of immigrants from Mexico — a significant, but uncertain, number of them in the U.S. illegally.

It was a balancing act in this part of northern Indiana, founded on sometimes conflicting views about business and faith, community and law. And the proposal for a 1,200-bed detention center put decision-makers on the tightrope.

"It was like a microcosm of all the different issues of immigration," Yoder said, "right here in this county."

___

Immigration and Customs Enforcement has long sought to consolidate immigrants held in scattered Midwest jails. Since 2011, contractors have proposed detention centers in seven communities near Chicago, from the exurb of Crete, Illinois, to the steel center of Gary, Indiana.

"This is a game of whack-a-mole," said Fred Tsao of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, who has worked with activists to push a number of those proposals to defeat.

Local governments in Texas and California recently canceled agreements to hold detainees for ICE even as other communities seek the jobs and dollars that doing so can generate.

But demand for those facilities is rising. Though Trump talks up building a border wall, his administration has focused a large part of its policy on arrests away from the border and is seeking new detention sites.

ICE does not own most of these facilities. Instead, it hires companies whose for-profit lockups hold two-thirds of the immigrants detained for being in the country illegally, with others in local jails under contract. The agency spends about $134 a day to hold each detainee, government figures show .

Last fall, ICE put out a request for new detention sites near Chicago, Detroit, Salt Lake City and St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as in South Texas, as it sought to expand capacity from 40,000 migrants to 51,000.

A proposal by CoreCivic Inc., one of the nation's largest private prison companies, put Elkhart County on that list.

The county, two hours east of Chicago, is the hub of the booming recreational vehicle industry with around 2 percent unemployment. A large Amish population has long provided many factory workers, but with 9,000 openings, "we have a lot of jobs that nobody wants," said Yoder, whose father once led RV manufacturer Jayco Inc.

Immigrants have filled much of the gap in the workforce, yet residents remain divided on issues including immigration. More than 7,000 packed an Elkhart school gym in May to cheer Trump. But the county seat of Goshen — dotted with multilingual yard signs proclaiming "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor"– is a counterweight, home to a Mennonite college and large Latino population.

The proposal for a detention center would jab at those complexities. Yoder jumped in first, trying for a dialogue instead of a dispute.

"Commissioners had a mess to deal with, and that's the reason I reached out early," Yoder said. "It didn't go as planned. Maybe that was because I was naive."

___

Richard Aguirre had spent months helping start an ID card program for Goshen's immigrants, many barred from obtaining driver's licenses because they were in the U.S. illegally. To Aguirre, a Goshen College administrator, it was a victory, however local.

On campus, he knew dozens of students brought to the U.S. illegally as children. The grandson of Mexican immigrants, Aguirre had childhood memories of relatives struggling to get by without work papers.

"It struck me as unfair that depending on which side of the border you were born on, you had a good life or a fairly miserable life," he said.

When Yoder heard about the detention center, he knew it might antagonize people like Aguirre. But the project would be difficult to turn down, Yoder said. It would reap jobs and taxes from a site across from the county landfill and jail. Many Republican voters would likely back it.

So he asked his pastor to arrange a meeting with Mennonite clergy, many of whom preach a message of welcoming the stranger. If a detention center was going to get built, Yoder said, maybe it would be best where clergy could minister to detainees.

He also was mindful of the county's growing Latino population and Goshen's more liberal voters. Elkhart County is about 16 percent Hispanic, drawn to a region that produces 4 of every 5 RVs in North America. In Goshen, though, nearly a third of residents are Latino, accounting for more than half of school enrollment. Downtown, taquerias mix with wine bars and antique shops.

So the same day he spoke to pastors, Yoder met with Goshen Mayor Jeremy Stutsman, Aguirre and others.

"I'd really like your help communicating calmness," the commissioner said.

"My reaction was, 'No way!'" Aguirre said.

That night, he started a Facebook page for the Coalition Against the Elkhart County Immigration Detention Center. Activists had already planned a rally to celebrate the ID cards. Aguirre recast it as a protest.

Driving toward the courthouse on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, Aguirre figured icy rain would cap turnout at 60. Then he climbed to the top of the granite steps, handing a microphone to Felipe Merino, an immigration attorney and the president of Goshen's school board.

"I want you to raise your hands if you believe that we do not want an immigration detention facility in Elkhart County, Indiana!" Merino said.

More than 200 thrust fists from under umbrellas.

"No!" they shouted.

___

Listening to Yoder explain the detention center, Neil Amstutz, pastor of Waterford Mennonite Church, knew it was a proposal he could not abide.

Years before, he had served as a missionary in Bolivia and worked in San Antonio, Texas, to settle refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala, becoming fluent in Spanish. After talking with fellow Mennonite clergy, he called a Mexican immigrant pastor, Jose Luis Gutierrez, whose Pentecostal church sits alongside an apple orchard two miles from Amstutz's own.

Gutierrez's church, Comunidad Cristiana Adulam, is named for the biblical cave where King David took refuge.

"Some people from my community find that kind of protection — they feel like refugees — in the church," Gutierrez said. "It's a safe place for worship because of the language, and it doesn't matter if they have documents or not."

With another pastor, Gutierrez and Amstutz invited clergy from around the county to meet, and the group made plans for a communitywide service to oppose the detention center.

On Dec. 17, in a sanctuary decorated with candles for the holiday, an impromptu congregation filled most of the pews of Elkhart's First Presbyterian Church.

"Why are we here?" Amstutz preached. "To show that whether or not our government builds a bigger wall to keep immigrants out, God's church is about breaking down dividing walls!"

But many immigrants were increasingly apprehensive.

When 19-year-old Lizeth Ochoa first heard about the detention center, she imagined a lockup filled with criminals.

"But then I realized, oh, it's for people like me," said Ochoa.

When Ochoa was 9 months old, her mother paid a smuggler to spirit them from Mexico. They joined her father, who had already found work in Elkhart.

Now, though, her place in the U.S. felt increasingly tenuous. President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals initiative had eased concerns about deportation, but Trump was pulling the plug on the program. At home, she and her parents avoided talk of the detention center, fearful of upsetting her four U.S.-born siblings. But quietly, she considered what they would do if ICE officers newly assigned to Elkhart knocked on their door.

"It's been very stressful, (thinking) that my siblings might end up in foster homes because my parents and I would get deported," said Ochoa, who will be a junior next fall at Goshen College. Nearly a quarter of its 900 students are now Latino, many brought to the U.S. illegally when they were children, and so Ochoa was not alone in worrying.

Trump's election had already unsettled some in Gutierrez's congregation. Talk of a detention center renewed their uneasiness.

"If ICE can do that in this county, people are going to go away," said Luis Fraire, a mechanic who came to Elkhart from Mexico 11 years ago, married and started a family and a business.

"We are all brothers in God," he said, as fellow worshippers filtered out of Adulam one Sunday. "We pray to God because nobody else can stop this but him."

___

To others, a detention center was just what the county needed.

"Make sure you build it big 'cause it's going to be overflowing," George Holiday, a retired forklift driver, posted online.

In an interview, Holiday said the county had changed tremendously in recent years, with more signs in Spanish and new arrivals who don't seem to speak English. Immigrants work hard but disregard laws requiring permission to enter or stay, he said.

A decade ago, Bob Schrameyer and fellow Goshen residents lobbied police to partner with ICE, and pushed employers to vet workers' legal status. The problem, Schrameyer contends, is that many immigrants don't pay their fair share of taxes, while collecting welfare benefits.

When he sought tighter controls, those who disagreed argued that enforcement was the federal government's job. But when the Trump administration tried to do it, people complained about that, too, said Schrameyer, a retiree and founder of the local Citizens for Immigration Law Enforcement.

The detention center "was a no-brainer," bound to bring in new taxes, Schrameyer said.

"But the loud opponents of it were the supporters of illegal immigrants in the area and, of course, they were worried the storm troopers were coming to town," Schrameyer said.

On a recent morning, Roland Weaver put aside the trowel he was using to seal the foundation of his home, down County Road 7 from the proposed detention site. Such a facility would uphold the rule of law, he said, but there was more to it.

"We have a Constitution founded on the principles of God, and a lot of them, the illegals, they don't have that

where they're from and so they can bring in their beliefs. That's what waters down what this country was founded on," said Weaver, a tiler at an RV plant.

"A lot of people say Jesus, he loved illegals and he didn't have borders when he was on this earth. But, hey, it's a different world."

___

At a holiday gathering in late December, Mayor Stutsman ran into retired cardiologist Mark Smucker. Talking over the proposal, the men were joined by Galen Miller, owner of a poultry company and a friend of Smucker's since childhood.

"The argument I made was if we ever solve our problems with immigration in this country, either by reform or by deporting everybody, at some point we aren't going to need an immigration detention center," Smucker said. "It seemed to me that the people in the RV manufacturing community would not like to see even more of their workers drift away."

Stutsman, a Democrat, proposed a letter of opposition. Miller agreed to reach out to executives at Elkhart's RV companies.

Back when CoreCivic had first called, Yoder said he cautioned a company official that the biggest potential pitfall would be wariness from major employers. But any concerns had largely been kept silent.

"There is this dilemma," said Jim Siegmann, former owner of a printing company who is active in business and civic circles. Many of Elkhart's business leaders, he said, are politically conservative but count on immigrant workers, though some are in the U.S. illegally.

"They know they couldn't run their businesses without them," he said.

When a small group met in Stutsman's office, several executives endorsed his letter.

Worries, though, were stretching beyond profits. Civic leaders, wary of recessions and the region's reputation as flyover country, had long invested in projects to make the county a draw for companies and workers. How did a detention center fit that script?

On a recent morning, Pete McCown, president of the Community Foundation of Elkhart County, pointed from his office window to construction turning an industrial island at the junction of Elkhart's rivers into a new hub with hundreds of apartments. Construction workers clambered over a shell that will house a $68 million community center with a natatorium for competitive swimming.

Elkhart wants jobs, McCown said. But a detention center would add positions that could be difficult to fill, while potentially labeling the county as a place to lock people up.

"We don't want that to become our identification," he said.

___

Stopping by the Electric Brew coffee shop in early January, Yoder ran into Aguirre.

CoreCivic officials were coming to meet business leaders, the commissioner said. Activists, whose online group had swelled to more than 2,000, organized a news conference, so representatives from the Nashville-based company would arrive to find their proposal in headlines.

The next morning, Jan. 17, Aguirre and others held protest signs outside Ivy Tech Community College as visitors in suits filed in.

Inside, CoreCivic representatives laid out their plans to executives from Thor Industries Inc. and Forest River Inc., the country's largest RV makers; parts supplier Lippert Components; and other major employers.

They and other executives declined to comment or did not respond to calls or emails. But people who attended the meeting or spoke with those who did said that after listening to CoreCivic's presentation, local executives were very direct.

"I do business here. I've been here my whole life, and I don't want you to come here," Forest River CEO Peter Liegl is said to have told the visitors.

Employers' biggest issue was that a detention center "would create concern and fear within the Latino community and would lead them to relocate," said CoreCivic spokesman Steve Owen, who attended the meeting.

"That, to me, was the defining moment," said Yoder.

The next day, Stutsman released his letter.

"Any tax dollars generated by the project wouldn't be enough to offset the long-lasting damage such a facility would do to our county," he wrote, backed by 45 CEOs and civic leaders. "Join us in showing all newcomers to our communities how welcoming we are."

Yoder counseled CoreCivic officials to think over their next move. It came the following Monday.

"After careful consideration," a company official wrote, "CoreCivic has decided to withdraw its application."

"We won!" Aguirre posted on Facebook. "We won!"

___

On the first Friday night of each month, Goshen residents gather around the Elkhart County Courthouse for a street festival.

In early June, an Amish couple sold kettle corn. Children scribbled their names on the sidewalk with chalk. A local band, Los Ortega, pumped Mexican dance tunes across the grass.

"I love living here," said Pepe Urzua, a roofer who arrived from Mexico eight years ago, cradling his infant daughter. "It's a place where you want to raise your kids."

Across the grass, Rob Emahiser, a salesman for a tire manufacturer, looked out over the crowd.

"I'm a Trump-loving Republican, and I love everything about this community," he said.

Emahiser raised his beer to the tax cut Trump signed into law. Then he praised Latino co-workers and neighbors for working hard and taking care of their families — and pointed out that sometimes he and the president would have to disagree.

"They wanted to build a detention center in this town," he said as a guitarist led a line of dancing Latino couples through lengthening shadows. "That's just not who we are."

___

Geller can be reached at ageller//twitter.com/AdGeller

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Microsoft Employees Question C.E.O. Over Company's Contract With ICE

By Sheera Frenkel

New York Times, July 26, 2018

SAN FRANCISCO — Microsoft employees questioned the company's chief executive, Satya Nadella, on Thursday, presenting him with a petition signed by more than 300,000 people that called on the software maker to cancel its contract with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, according to two people who attended the event.

Mr. Nadella was attending an annual gathering with interns at Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond, Wash., when the employees used the question-and-answer session to ask about the company's government contracts, said the people, who declined to be identified for fear of retaliation. One employee presented Mr. Nadella with a USB stick that contained the petition, along with the signatures, including 500 from Microsoft employees, they said.

"We demand Microsoft stop enabling ICE's mission to punish families seeking safety," read the petition, a copy of which was obtained by The New York Times. The petition also called for all tech companies that support the operations of ICE and the Customs and Border Protection agency to "cancel their contracts."

The presentation of the petition is the latest example of employee activism at large tech companies against the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy on immigration, which had resulted in children being separated from their migrant parents earlier this year. The White House has backed down from the policy, but the administration has struggled in recent weeks to reunite children with their families.

Workers at several Silicon Valley companies were up in arms over the issue, but Microsoft came under particular scrutiny from its employees because the company has a contract for processing data and artificial intelligence capabilities with ICE. The agency had been separating migrant parents and their children at the border with Mexico. Last month, Microsoft employees circulated a letter that called on their employer to cancel all contracts with ICE, among other measures.

In response, Microsoft said last month that to the best of its knowledge, its products and services were not being used by federal agencies to separate children from their families at the border. It added that it was "dismayed" by the Trump administration's immigration policy and urged that it be changed.

The scrutiny comes as Microsoft has been positioning itself as a moral leader of the technology industry. Mr. Nadella and Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, have publicly said they wanted to protect user privacy and establish ethical guidelines for new technology like artificial intelligence.

Microsoft declined to comment on Thursday's petition, but confirmed that Mr. Nadella had received the USB stick.

The petition was started earlier this month by a coalition of nonprofit organizations calling for immigration reform. A group of Microsoft employees circulated the petition internally, collecting signatures. The group then decided to present Mr. Nadella with the petition and use the opportunity to raise their concerns directly with him, said employees involved in Thursday's encounter. They said they chose that day to present the petition because it coincided with the deadline set by a federal court to reunite children and parents who had been divided under the former policy.

"Microsoft is complicit in profiting from a violent and murderous mass incarceration and deportation scheme," said Scott Roberts, senior campaign director at Color of Change, a civil rights advocacy group which helped start the petition. "Microsoft must take action in the one way that will make an actual impact, canceling the contract."

Follow Sheera Frenkel on Twitter: @sheeraf.

Vermont Tech Gets Pushback For ICE Contracts

By Elizabeth Hewitt

VTDigger (VT), July 26, 2018

Vermont Technical College is the latest school to get blowback for its contracts with U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement amid nationwide protests over President Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" immigration policies.

VTC received nearly $50,000 from the agency this year for assorted training courses for ICE employees. It's worked with ICE before, and the relationship between the two has sparked a petition drive from a student elsewhere in the Vermont State Colleges System and a rebuke from advocates, including the Vermont chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

"Many Vermonters don't want their local institutions involved with ICE and Border Patrol, for good reason," ACLU-

VT executive director James Lyall said in a statement. "These are agencies that operate as paramilitary organizations, ignore legal limits on their authority, and display profound contempt for human rights. To say that ICE's mission and culture are incompatible with Vermont values would be a gross understatement, and people are right to question why Vermont State Colleges would have anything to do with such a lawless and abusive agency."

Administrators, however, are defending the services provided to the agency as precisely in line with Vermont Tech's goal to stimulate workforce development in the state.

For two financial accounting courses and two leadership trainings given to ICE employees, the school received a total of $46,940 from the agency during the last fiscal year, according to VTC spokesperson Amanda Chaulk.

The Department of Homeland Security, which houses ICE, contracted the school for leadership trainings for supervisors and non-supervisors, which were delivered over the course of five weeks, according to school officials. The financial accounting contract included a college-level credit course in each of the fall and spring semesters of the 2017-18 academic year for the financial operations of the DHS Burlington unit.

The school has worked with ICE on multiple occasions before, with contracts dating back to 2007, according to a federal procurement database. Chaulk said the financial accounting course had been offered to ICE employees in years prior, but the total amount paid out to VTC by ICE over the years wasn't immediately available.

She added that the school does not endorse the policy of separating families at the border "in any way."

"This is a clear contradiction to the values of the [Vermont State Colleges system]," she said.

The school hasn't been asked to offer any additional trainings and isn't currently bidding on any contracts with the agency, she said. But she also wouldn't rule out the school accepting contracts with ICE in the future.

"We seek to provide education where we have expertise, as in these examples of leadership and financial best practices. We would not provide training for areas outside of our expertise or that furthered any policies that contradict our values," she said.

Jeb Spaulding, the chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges, which includes Vermont Tech, also sought to distance the college from the president's policies while also defending their work with the agency.

"The small contract Vermont Tech had with DHS-Immigration and Customs Enforcement in no way was linked to policies coming out of Washington. Neither the college nor the individuals receiving education and training are responsible for those policies. However, the assistance provided to the individuals, supported by the contract, improved their economic prospects and Vermont's economy. That is Vermont Tech's mission," he said.

ICE isn't in charge of enforcing the Trump administration's controversial policy of separating families at the border – that task has gone to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which is also housed within DHS. But ICE, which arrests, detains and deports unauthorized immigrants, has become a lighting rod for opposition to Trump's immigration crackdown. Calls to abolish the agency have even made the jump from progressive groups to certain mainstream Democrats, including potential 2020 presidential contender Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

Mackenzie Murdoch is rising sophomore at Northern Vermont University, which is part of the Vermont State Colleges system. She started an online petition calling for the VSC to cut all ties with ICE, or to remove mentions of inclusion and diversity from its schools' mission statements.

"ICE and similar organizations have shown themselves to be an immoral and racist programs at an institutional level, and if Vermont State Colleges want to establish connections with those morals, they must truthfully reflect that in mission statements to incoming students," her petition on Action Network states.

She's been corresponding with administrators in the VSC's chancellor's office and at VTC while home in New Hampshire for the summer, and she hopes to set up a meeting when she gets back. But she wants to be clear that taking any money from the agency is a tacit endorsement of their activities.

"I think if you provide training to any aspect of that group it is in hand supporting what else they're doing. And I don't think that's right," she said.

VTC isn't the only Vermont institution to have done business with ICE. At least a dozen private businesses have over years, as well as the University of Vermont, according to a government database. UVM appears to have signed just one contract with the agency, back in 2006.

The $9,900 deal was "for instruction and training that would allow ICE personnel to more effectively respond to audit requests," according to ICE spokesperson Matthew Bourke.

ICE Steps Up Presence In Madison

By Steven Elbow

Madison (WI) Capital Times, July 26, 2018

Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney says that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers are stepping up their presence in the Madison area.

Mahoney said he was contacted weeks ago by an ICE officer who was recently assigned to Madison asking for his participation in the 287(g) program, which enlists local officers to assist the agency, part of a crackdown on immigration that has been a focus of President Donald Trump's administration.

Mahoney said he told the agent, "I'm not interested."

"I have very important things to do in my community other than forcing my deputies to become ICE agents," he said. "And more importantly, my task is to build relationships, not tear down relationships."

Critics claim that the program has led to more racial profiling in other communities. ICE says the program makes the community safer, but Mahoney said it does the opposite.

"The real danger to that is you empower the predators who are preying on the non-documented who fear coming forward to law enforcement," he said. "You empower the oppressors, you empower the predator, and then it becomes less safe for U.S. citizens because they become victims."

Although the program offers needed funding, Mahoney said, "this isn't generally a revenue generating business, or shouldn't be."

So far, only one law enforcement agency in the state has signed on with the 287(g) program. In April, Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson announced that his department had been approved for the program, which trains deputies assigned to the jail to assist in identifying people who are in the country illegally.

The presence of an ICE officer in Madison has led to speculation that the agency is setting up a field office. But an ICE spokeswoman dismissed the term.

"There is not an ICE office in Madison," said Nicole Alberico, a public affairs officer for ICE's Chicago office, which covers Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Wisconsin. "There's an officer who covers the area but not an office. The ICE office in Milwaukee works cases for the Madison area."

Alberico wouldn't say how long the officer had been working in Madison, or if his presence signals a future increase in enforcement.

Mahoney said the officer works out of the U.S. Attorney's Office in downtown Madison, just off the Capitol Square. He suggested that the agent may have been assigned because ICE officials "weren't getting a lot of support out of law enforcement in this county."

Mahoney and other law enforcement officials in the county have refused to cooperate with ICE, and Mahoney has rejected requests by ICE to hold people for 48 hours after they post bail or serve their sentences so ICE officials can arrange to detain them.

Mahoney said he considers the holds unconstitutional because there's no legal basis for holding an inmate who has posted bail or completed a sentence.

"That's a violation of Fourth Amendment search and seizure," he said. "It's a violation of 16th Amendment constitutional due process."

While the jail doesn't notify ICE of inmates' immigration status, the agency can identify illegal immigrants through the FBI's National Criminal Intelligence Center, which receives fingerprints obtained during the booking process.

Mahoney said ICE cautioned him that without his cooperation in detaining inmates, federal agents would be forced to hunt down offenders in the community, which poses unnecessary risks.

"My position is, you know that they're here, if you want them, come sit in the lobby when they bail out," he said. "If you want them, if you think you've got reason to arrest them, then arrest them."

Although Mahoney said he won't honor detainment requests, ICE still makes them. Alberico said ICE agents recently intended to request a detainer on a 26-year-old Middleton man after he posted bail, but he was released before one could be filed.

Jose Alberto Alonzo-Manzano was arrested earlier this month by town of Madison officers for a drunken driving offense, his third. He had been deported twice before, according to Alberico, and had re-entered the country illegally both times.

"He illegally re-entered the United States after both removals, which are felonies," she said in an email.

He was detained on July 17 in Middleton and was taken to a detention facility in Dodge County.

It's unclear whether the installation of an ICE agent in Madison means a more vigorous detention program.

Madison Police Department officials have "heard nothing about ICE doing anything in Madison," said MPD spokesman Joel DeSpain.

Karen Menéndez Coller, executive director of Centro Hispano, which serves the local Latino community, said she has heard no reports of raids.

"I'm not convinced ICE has increased activity," she said in an email.

But based on ICE's request to enlist his deputies to enforce federal immigration laws, Mahoney suspects that more enforcement is on the horizon.

"I think they're trying to step up removals," he said.

9th Circuit Says Restaurant's Employment Records Must Be Suppressed In Immigration Case

By Daniel Wiessner

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Immigrant Mother Fights To Remain In New Orleans With Her Family

By Maria Clark

New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 26, 2018

The six-month check-ins with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in New Orleans were nerve-racking but

part of a routine Nancy Oliva-Baca had become used to since the process began in October 2014.

Oliva-Baca, who came to the U.S. in 2014 while fleeing violence in Honduras, was on what is called a temporary order of supervision. The order allows thousands of immigrants who enter the United States without legal documents to check in periodically with ICE so they can remain in the country. Under previous administrations, individuals with orders of supervision were not deemed a priority for deportation, either because they did not have criminal records or were not considered a flight-risk because they had family in the U.S.

That policy changed in 2017, and immigration officials expanded deportation priorities to include anyone unlawfully present in the United States, whether they had a criminal record or not.

Oliva-Baca was aware of the risk, but she still expected the check-in on Friday, June 29 to be like all the others.

She thought she would sign the document that showed ICE she had appeared, and then go home, as she had done every six months since she crossed the border with her son Christopher, who is now 18. Instead, she was taken to jail, and then a detention facility.

Oliva-Baca recently shared her story over the phone, calling from La Salle Detention Center in Jena, Louisiana, where she has been detained since the June 29 check-in.

Until she was detained, the only thing Oliva-Baca remembered being different about her meeting with ICE was that they asked her about her children's legal status for the first time.

Her daughter, Yoani, is 9 and a U.S. citizen. Christopher, she explained, qualified for asylum in March 2017 and the family was in the process of trying to apply for his green card when she was detained.

"They didn't explain to me why I was being arrested. They don't tell you where you are going. I was allowed to use my phone once to call my husband to tell him I was being detained," Oliva-Baca said.

Oliva-Baca first came to the United States 18 years ago and was deported five years later. She returned to the U.S. to work intermittently and left on her own accord to reunite with her family in Honduras. She was living in Honduras in 2014 and said she had no plans to return to the United States until her son started receiving death threats after refusing to join a gang.

"They tried to force him into it and hurt him, but he never joined them. I had no intention to come back, but we did it to save his life," she said.

Bryan Cox, a spokesperson for the New Orleans ICE field office confirmed that Oliva-Baca was taken into custody on June 29.

"Ms. Oliva-Baca was previously removed from the U.S. in October 2005 and she subsequently illegally re-entered the country, which is a felony act. ICE encountered her again in October 2014, and while subject to detention and removal, ICE exercised discretion and temporarily released Ms. Oliva-Baca from custody on an Order of Supervision based on the totality of the circumstances at the time," he added in a written statement.

Like many immigrants without legal status arrested in New Orleans, Oliva-Baca first was taken to St. Tammany Parish Jail and then LaSalle Detention Center, nearly five hours away from New Orleans.

Her children remain with their father. Oliva-Baca did not want to name him in this article because of his legal status.

Oliva-Baca said that at least at LaSalle she has been able to maintain phone contact with her family.

Shortly after her arrest, The New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice, sent out a petition signed by more than 1,200 people. It asked ICE to approve a stay of deportation and allow Oliva-Baca to remain with her family in the United States, continuing the check-in process with immigration officials.

Chloe Sigal, with the Congress of Day Laborers, a New Orleans-based advocacy group for immigrant rights, confirmed on Tuesday (July 24) that request had been denied. She is still in ICE custody and has not yet been notified when she will be sent back to Honduras.

"This is the most painful thing that has happened to me," Oliva-Baca said. "They have taken me from my children and they are being harmed by this."

Maria Clark writes about immigration, health, doctors, patients and health care in Louisiana for NOLA.com | The Times Picayune and NOLA Mundo. Reach her at mclark@nola.com or 504.258.5306. Or follow her on Twitter at @MariaPClark1 .

Immigration Officials Target 75 New Jersey Businesses

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) – The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency has notified 75 businesses in New Jersey that they will be audited for suspect immigration violations.

The inspections are part of 2,738 audits announced last week.

ICE spokesman Emilio Dabul tells The Star-Ledger of Newark the agency cannot identify the businesses or say why they were given notices.

Businesses must turn over their records within three business days. They could be fined or face prosecution if officials find they are violating immigration laws.

___

Information from: The (Newark, N.J.) Star-Ledger, http://www.nj.com

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

ICE Targets 75 N.J. Businesses Suspected Of Hiring Unauthorized Immigrants Or Other Violations

By Kelly Heyboer

NJ News, July 26, 2018

Immigration officials have notified 75 New Jersey businesses that their hiring records will be audited to determine if they are employing unauthorized immigrants or violating other labor laws, federal officials said.

The New Jersey businesses targeted for inspections were among 2,738 flagged for audits last week during a four-day nationwide operation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the agency said.

"This is not a victimless crime," said Derek Benner, acting executive associate director for ICE's Homeland Security Investigations unit. "Unauthorized workers often use stolen identities of legal U.S. workers, which can significantly impact the identity theft victim's credit, medical records and other aspects of their everyday life."

In addition to handing out the audit notices, ICE arrested 32 people during the four-day operation, though none were in New Jersey, said Emilio Dabul, an ICE spokesman.

ICE did not identify the New Jersey businesses that were given notices or why they were targeted.

"As per privacy rules, those businesses cannot be identified," Dabul said.

The notices were handed out as the Trump administration has been stepping up enforcement of federal laws prohibiting companies and businesses from employing immigrants living in the country illegally.

In early January, immigration agents descended on more than 100 7-Eleven convenience stores around the nation, including several in New Jersey, to check the immigration status of employees.

At the time, ICE officials said the 7-Eleven operation was a "a harbinger of what's to come" for employers.

Later that month, ICE began a two-month operation that handed out 2,540 I-9 Notices of Inspection, known as NOIs, and made 61 arrests at businesses around the nation suspected of hiring unauthorized workers or violating other laws, federal officials said.

The notices handed out last week were the second part of that operation. The agency is trying to "create a culture of compliance" among employers, ICE officials said.

Officials at 7-Eleven's corporate headquarters did not immediately respond to questions about whether any of their franchises in New Jersey or elsewhere received audit notices in last week's ICE operation.

In addition to focusing on the employment of unauthorized immigrants, the audits might uncover worker exploitation, illegal wages, child labor and other illegal practices, federal officials said.

Businesses that receive audit notices must turn over their hiring records within three business days. If it is found they are employing unauthorized immigrants, the businesses could be fined or face possible criminal prosecution.

Workers living in the U.S. illegally could also be arrested and face deportation, ICE officials said. That includes workers who give false or stolen social security numbers or fake green cards when they apply for jobs.

Asplundh Tree Experts, headquartered near Philadelphia, faced the largest-ever financial penalty in an immigration case last year after top company officials were accused of turning a blind eye when lower level employees repeatedly hired unauthorized immigrants to trim trees and clear brush nationwide.

In that case, managers hired workers who allegedly presented bogus driver's licenses, stolen Social Security numbers and fake green cards.

The company was ordered to forfeit $80 million dollars and pay an additional $15 million dollars in civil fines, ICE officials said. The company accepted responsibility for the charges and apologized to customers.

Kelly Heyboer may be reached at kheyboer@njadvancemedia.com. Follow her on Twitter @KellyHeyboer. Find her at KellyHeyboerReporter on Facebook.

Is Enough Being Done To Hold Employers Accountable In Roundups Of Undocumented Workers? Editorial Board Roundtable

Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 26, 2018

With some the biggest Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids hitting Northeast Ohio with detention of 114 at Corso's Flower and Garden Center in Sandusky early last month, followed soon after by the arrests of 146 at Fresh Mark's Salem meatpacking plant, are these crackdowns also holding employers responsible for their hiring practices?

In 2010, Ramon Ornelas of Norwalk, owner of eight Casa Fiesta restaurants, pleaded guilty to harboring illegal immigrants and filing false tax returns. But high-profile employer prosecutions were not broadly evident under former President Barack Obama or now under President Donald Trump.

After the Fresh Mark raids last month, an ICE statement quoted Steve Francis, the Homeland Security Investigations special agent in charge for Michigan and Ohio, saying, "Unlawful employment is one of the key magnets drawing

illegal aliens across our borders. ... Businesses who knowingly harbor and hire illegal aliens as a business model must be held accountable for their actions."

That's a strong argument for going after employers. But will it happen?

Veronica Isabel Dahlberg, who directs the small local nonprofit HOLA Ohio, told our editorial board Tuesday that of 96 Corso's workers who were eventually arrested, about 15 have been referred for federal prosecution for illegal re-entry or identity crimes, and the rest have been going through a series of bond hearings. Her organization has already spent about $30,000 toward these bonds, she said, thanks in part to a very generous donor, but she said the process, which will not necessarily prevent eventual deportations, has depleted the resources of what already was a poor immigrant community and threatened the viability of a longtime local employer. The Corso's raid resulted in about 200 U.S. citizen children having one or both parents arrested, Dahlberg said, estimating a similar impact at Fresh Mark.

So what does our editorial board roundtable think about the raids? Is the federal government targeting employers as promised? This is the first roundtable to include voices from the editorial board's four new members.

Ted Diadiun, editorial board member:

This is not complicated. ICE is doing its job when it finds people who are in this country illegally. They should be deported without delay and the employers who knowingly hire them should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Thomas Suddes, editorial writer:

These detentions are a blot on the United States. Of course, the government isn't going after employers. They have money; poor migrants don't.

Eric Foster, editorial board member:

We know these raids are not a part of a larger effort to reduce illegal immigration because common sense says you should attack the causes of illegal immigration, not the illegal immigrants themselves. Let us call these raids what they really are: playing to the political base.

Lisa Garvin, editorial board member:

It is heartbreaking to watch dozens of hardworking Ohioans rounded up in ICE raids, while their reason for being here – employers who knowingly hire cheap, undocumented workers – get off with a slap on the wrist, if that. It's past time for businesses to be held accountable for their major role as a magnet for illegal immigration, instead of punishing people who came here a better life.

Victor Ruiz, editorial board member:

Employers must be held accountable for creating an environment where they benefit "off the backs" of these families, who are then separated in humiliating and inhumane fashion. Families who are here, lured by these employers, need to be kept together and allowed to establish a life in this country.

Mary Cay Doherty, editorial board member:

Laws order our society. We follow laws, and in turn, we understand and expect that laws will be enforced. It is against the law to enter this country illegally, and it is against the law to hire illegal immigrants. Both laws should be enforced. Laws that are unjust can, and should be changed, and that conversation exceeds the space in this column.

Elizabeth Sullivan, director of opinion, cleveland.com:

Why is Homeland Security, charged with keeping us safe from terrorists, spending so much of its resources on arresting and deporting otherwise law-abiding, devout, hardworking family men and women? Employers who cynically take advantage of these folks' sub rosa status should be held accountable. But let's focus more urgently on changing the law to allow the millions already contributing to our local economies a path to citizenship.

ICE Set To Deport Wife Of Marine, An Iraq War Veteran, In August

By Maria Perez

Newsweek, July 26, 2018

The wife of a retired U.S. Marine and Iraq war combat veteran is set to be deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement early next month.

Alejandra Juarez, 38, was told by ICE officials that she has nine days left in the U.S. before she is deported back to Mexico, the Military Times reported. Her immigration status was first questioned at a traffic stop in 2013, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

Juarez is accused of illegally crossing the border to come to the U.S. in 1998. She married her husband, Marine Sergeant Cuauhtemoc "Temo" Juarez in 2000, the Military Times said. Temo was an infantryman who served in the Marines from 1995 to 1999, the newspaper said. He was deployed in South America and Africa before he moved to Orlando, Florida, to join the Army National Guard.

The couple has two daughters together, Estela, 8, and Pamela, 16, who face the prospect of a split family life. The family's attorney, Chelsea Nowel, told the publication that Juarez does not have a criminal record despite the accusation that she entered the country illegally 20 years ago.

"The United States has a lot of policies in place to protect veterans and active duty and their families, and it is absolutely, incredibly, frustrating that these are not being made available to the wife of a decorated veteran who has served overseas multiple times," Nowel told the publication. "We are very hopeful we will be able to work with the Department of Homeland Security and with ICE to afford her an ability to stay."

Democratic Representative Darren Soto, of Florida, told the Military Times that he filed a bill, called the "Patriot

Spouses Act," which would protect Juarez and allow her to stay in the U.S., but the bill has not been looked at yet by a House committee.

"Alejandra deserves to stay in the country she has called home for over 20 years, the country her husband patriotically served as a Marine and Florida National Guardsman. The only country her two American-born daughters have known," Soto said.

In a statement to Newsweek, an ICE spokesperson said that Juarez was caught attempting to illegally enter the U.S. in 1998 and removed, but illegally entered the U.S. after removal.

"ICE arrested her in August 2013 and notified her the agency would reinstate her prior removal order," the statement read. "ICE subsequently exercised temporary discretion by releasing her on an Order of Supervision and granted her temporary stays of removal in August 2015 and August 2016. At this time, Juarez must comply with her removal order and depart the U.S."

President Donald Trump has targeted immigrants since taking office—both in his rhetoric, in which he often describes them as animals or criminals, and in several controversial policies.

There was a national outcry over a determined effort to prosecute those caught crossing the border illegally, and to separate any small children from their parents while their cases are handled. The policy means that about 2,300 children have been held in separate detention centers.

On Tuesday, ICE officials were ordered by a federal judge to release an Ecuadorian immigrant being held for deportation after ICE agents arrested him for delivering pizza to an army base in Brooklyn, New York.

This has been updated to include a comment from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

17-Year Old Guatemalan Girl Fears Deportation

By Nancy Montoya

Arizona Public Media, July 26, 2018

Seventeen-year-old Jesse Tomas from Guatemala may be spending her final days in the United States awaiting deportation, according to the judge evaluating her immigration case.

After an initial meeting with Immigration and Customs Enforcement Thursday, Jesse said she and her father Tomas were told that they will likely be deported back to Guatemala. They have no documents to prove they are in fear for their lives if they return to their country.

The teenager had endured threats of rape and assaults from gang members who wanted her father to pay them for her safety. She and her father fled to the U.S. to seek asylum. They left behind Jesse's two younger brothers and her mother in a rural village.

The two traveled through Mexico and made their way to Nogales where they legally asked for asylum. Then they temporarily stayed at a shelter in Tucson.

U.S. Immigration officials cleared them to travel to West Palm Beach, Florida, where they have friends, to await the asylum hearing.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in early July that fear of gang and domestic violence will no longer be accepted by U.S. immigration as reasons for granting asylum.

"My father is under a lot of pressure" Jesse said. There was no one to represent them at the hearing and she said understanding the proceeding was almost impossible.

Jesse said a translator told them that an ICE agent would be by to see them in a day or two and advised them to go home and wait. Her father left early in the morning to get food and had not returned 12 hours later, she said.

She fears he may have already been picked up by immigration officials. She said by phone that she plans to lock the door of the small bedroom they rented from another Guatemalan family and wait.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Feds Bust Illegal Immigrants On ID Fraud

Move reverses Obama-era policy of downplaying fraud

By Stephen Dinan

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

More than 20 illegal immigrants have been charged with document and benefit fraud, officials announced Thursday, after a Boston-based sweep designed to crack down on the means many illegal immigrants use to live and remain in the U.S.

All told, the feds netted 25 people — 21 of them illegal immigrants — in the sweep, including a convicted murderer who escaped from Puerto Rican prison and had been living under a different name in Massachusetts, and a drug trafficker who authorities say stole the identity of a U.S. citizen displaced by last year's hurricanes in Puerto Rico.

That person was receiving unemployment benefits and living in taxpayer-funded housing, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said.

Identity fraud is one of the seamy sides of illegal immigrant, with many of the estimated 11 million unauthorized migrants in the U.S. having stolen or illicitly bought someone else's identity, then used it to get a job or obtain benefits.

The Obama administration downplayed the effects of identity fraud, issuing guidance saying it wouldn't be held

against illegal immigrants seeking protections such as the DACA deportation amnesty.

Mr. Sessions said they're changing that mentality.

"Across this city and across America, teachers, truck drivers, and construction workers are going to work and paying taxes that are being stolen from the public treasury by fraudsters and criminals," he said in announcing the charges against 25 people.

Most of the 25 are Dominicans who stole identities of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, an American territory.

One of those citizens lost his house in the hurricanes last year and applied for government assistance. He was told he was already getting a subsidy — in Massachusetts, Mr. Sessions said.

Lynn Residents Charged In Federal Document And Benefit Fraud Scam

Lynn (MA) Daily Item, July 26, 2018

Two Lynn residents were among 25 people charged Thursday in U.S. District Court as a result of a federal sweep targeting offenders of document and benefit fraud, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Kelvin Bautista Valdez, 31, a Dominican national, and John Doe, whose true identity is unknown, were charged with aggravated identity theft and false representation of a Social Security number.

Dubbed "Double Trouble," the investigation was conducted by Homeland Security Investigation's Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force. They are investigating suspected aliens, predominantly from the Dominican Republic, who are believed to have gotten stolen identities of U.S. citizens and obtained public benefits they would not otherwise be eligible to receive, such as Registry of Motor Vehicles identity documents, Social Security numbers, Medicaid, unemployment and public housing subsidies. A comparison of benefits records revealed the identities of numerous individuals who received benefits in Puerto Rico and Massachusetts.

Identity theft carries a mandatory two-year sentence, and false representation of a Social Security number provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison.

Sessions: Undocumented Identity Thieves Scammed Puerto Ricans To Get Gov't Benefits

By Dartunorro Clark

NBC News, July 26, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Thursday announced charges against 28 people, most of them undocumented immigrants, for stealing the identities of U.S. citizens to illegally receive government benefits.

Sessions said 22 of the individuals were undocumented Dominican Republic nationals who stole the identities primarily of Puerto Ricans and used stolen Social Security numbers and other documents to get government benefits, such as Medicaid and federally subsidized housing in Massachusetts.

"Two people, same name, same numbers. One in Puerto Rico and one in Massachusetts receiving Medicaid benefits," Sessions said. "In some cases, both people with the same identity were receiving medical services on the same day, in both jurisdictions, 1,600 miles apart."

In most cases, the identities of the victims were stolen years prior to Hurricane Maria, which hit the island last September. In a few cases, the identities were stolen in 2017, days or months after the hurricane, according to court documents. The victims often became aware of their identity being stolen after being displaced by the hurricane and applying for federal aid, documents show.

In some cases, he added, the individuals who committed the identity theft also obtained driver's licenses and registered to vote.

Sessions announced the charges in Boston with U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling, who said 21 of the individuals charged had been arrested and are in federal or state custody. He also said that several people charged are undergoing processing for deportation.

Those arrested face two years in federal prison.

Sessions said federal and state investigators analyzed Medicaid benefit payments and noticed suspicious activity. Investigators then discovered more than 110 cases of people with the same name and same Social Security number, he said. Officials and court documents did not reveal how the individuals were able to steal the personal information.

In one instance, Sessions said, a Puerto Rican affected by the hurricane attempted to apply for government housing but was told they were already receiving it in Massachusetts.

"These government programs are intended to help the poor, the elderly, American citizens — not those who are trespassing in the country," Sessions said. "This kind of fraud is a theft from our seniors, a theft from our taxpayers and theft from the needy, a theft from America."

Sessions said the case was a part of operation "Double Trouble," a task force his office is leading in conjunction with U.S. attorneys across the country to crack down on those committing document and benefit fraud, particularly undocumented immigrants.

"We are an open, generous nation," Sessions said. "Accepting illegal immigration, however, would be a disservice to the legal immigrants who played by the rules, waited their turn, respected our laws, our customs and our way of life."

He added, "You do not get to come to America unlawfully. Let's just make that clear. This system is built on making your application and waiting your turn, and not all of

those who are here illegally have committed additional crimes, but many have."

Undocumented Immigrants Who Stole Puerto Rican Identities To Gain Government Benefits Arrested, Jeff Sessions Says

By Maria Perez

Newsweek, July 26, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that at least 25 people were charged with immigration document and benefit fraud on Thursday in Boston.

Sessions said the probe arrested 22 people who were from the Dominican Republic who stole the identities of Puerto Ricans who were displaced by Hurricane Maria in September, WFXT reported. The individuals used stolen Social Security numbers and several other documents to receive government benefits in Massachusetts like government housing and Medicaid, according to WFXT.

"Two people, same name, same numbers. One in Puerto Rico and one in Massachusetts receiving Medicaid benefits," Sessions said during the press conference. "In some cases, both people with the same identity were receiving medical services on the same day, in both jurisdictions, 1,600 miles apart."

U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling announced the charges with Sessions and said that several of the individuals charged are currently being processed for deportation, WFXT reported. The people arrested can face a sentence of up to two years in prison, Lelling said.

Sessions told reporters that a Puerto Rican that was affected by Hurricane Maria tried to apply for government housing in Massachusetts but could not because they were told they were already receiving it, NBC News reported.

"These government programs are intended to help the poor, the elderly, American citizens, not those who are trespassing in the country," Sessions said. "This kind of fraud is a theft from our seniors, a theft from our taxpayers and theft from the needy, a theft from America."

The operation, which Sessions called "Double Trouble" is a task force he is in charge of that will work with U.S. attorneys across the country. The task force is intended to prosecute illegal immigrants who are committing document and benefit fraud, according to NBC News.

"We are an open, generous nation," Sessions said. "Accepting illegal immigration, however, would be a disservice to the legal immigrants who played by the rules, waited their turn, respected our laws, our customs and our way of life."

Sessions and President Donald Trump have begun a crackdown on immigration policies. Trump, who categorized illegal immigrants as criminals and animals, set several controversial policies to target them.

In June, more than 600 United Methodist church and clergy members brought formal church charges of child abuse, racial discrimination, and immortality against Sessions for the "zero tolerance" immigration policy, which led to the separations of children from their parents who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally.

Clothing, Jewelry, Prescription Drugs Among America's Most Counterfeited Items

USA Today, July 26, 2018

U.S. Customs and Border Protection processes over 278 million cargo and parcel shipments from overseas each year. While the majority of these contain legal goods, a small percentage contain counterfeit items. Customs and border officers seized and destroyed some 34,143 shipments containing counterfeit items in the 2017 fiscal year. Thousands more shipments of counterfeit goods likely went undetected and made it into the United States.

The CBP seized 8.2 percent more shipments of counterfeit goods in 2017 compared to the year before, when it seized 31,560 shipments. However, the value of the counterfeit items seized was considerably less, dropping from $1.38 billion in 2016 to $1.21 billion in 2017.

Forgers from across the globe send falsified goods to the United States to undercut prices set by the companies that actually own the intellectual property rights of the items. Knockoff electronics, accessories, and clothing rake in millions of dollars each year.

24/7 Wall Street reviewed the counterfeit items seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to determine America's most counterfeited items.

Counterfeit items are almost all luxury goods like watches, jewelry, electronics, and accessories. People are often duped into buying counterfeit versions of name brand goods when they see a deal that seems too good to be true. Some bogus items can actually be dangerous.

Pharmaceuticals are among the most counterfeited items. Counterfeit medicine can often contain incorrect dosages or even completely lack the active ingredient that makes the genuine drug effective. In the past, automobile parts have ranked among the most counterfeited items. These fabricated car parts often do not meet the safety standards that regulated and inspected products must adhere to, leading to unsafe conditions on the road.

10. Toys

FY 2017 seizures: 449

Pct. of total seizures: 1.3%

Value of seized goods: $12,128,156

During the 2016 fiscal year, there were so few seizures of counterfeit toys that U.S. Customs and Border Protection did not even list it as its own category. This past year, CBP officials seized 449 shipments of counterfeit toys. That

accounted for 1.3% of the total seizures. Had those toys been authentic, they would have been worth over $12 million, according to CBP officials.

9. Computers / accessories

FY 2017 seizures: 454

Pct. of total seizures: 1.3%

Value of seized goods: N/A

Computers are an integral part of the modern world, and counterfeiters have attempted to smuggle millions of dollars worth of computers and accessories into the United States. In one case, a California man tried to import fake computers, which would have been worth $2.6 million if genuine. He was sentenced to more than three years in prison. Hundreds of additional shipments of counterfeit computers were seized by CBP in the 2017 fiscal year.

8. Optical media

FY 2017 seizures: 809

Pct. of total seizures: 2.4%

Value of seized goods: $27,573,775

The number of seizures of counterfeit optical media has dropped steadily over the past few years. The CBP seized only 809 shipments of falsified items like DVDs, Blu-Rays, and video games in fiscal year 2017. The year before, there were 963 seized shipments. In 2015, there were 1,442 seizures. The items taken in these seizures in 2017 would have been worth over $27 million if genuine.

7. Pharmaceuticals / personal care

FY 2017 seizures: 2,209

Pct. of total seizures: 6.5%

Value of seized goods: $69,758,720

While many of the fake goods smuggled into the United States are relatively harmless luxury items like fashion accessories or entertainment, counterfeit pharmaceuticals can be dangerous. Inauthentic drugs that are not as effective as genuine medicine – or are completely ineffective – can risk the health of those who take them. Some counterfeit drugs may not have the correct dosage or altogether lack the active ingredient that makes the genuine medicine effective. CBP seized 2,209 shipments of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and personal care items worth an average of $31,579 per shipment. Pharmaceuticals and other personal care items, such as cosmetics, toothpaste, or shampoo, made up 6.5% of the seized counterfeit items in fiscal year 2017.

6. Handbags / wallets

FY 2017 seizures: 3,266

Pct. of total seizures: 9.6%

Value of seized goods: $234,451,926

Counterfeit handbags and wallets accounted for less than 10% of CBP seizures in 2017, yet the items seized would have been worth over $234 million if genuine – nearly one-fifth of the total value of all seized goods that year. Fake luxury goods like purses are often made overseas to replicate high-end and designer products at a lower price. Yet these items often use lower-grade materials and lack the durability and quality of the genuine products. CBP seized 3,266 shipments of counterfeit handbags and wallets in fiscal year 2017, a slight uptick from 2016 when 3,184 such shipments were intercepted.

5. Consumer products

FY 2017 seizures: 3,912

Pct. of total seizures: 11.5%

Value of seized goods: $46,265,355

Consumer products is a new category of seized counterfeit items. It includes drinking glasses, electronics accessories, and light fixtures. CBP officials seized 3,912 shipment of these everyday items in 2017, accounting for 11.5% of total seizures that year. Because many of the items in this category would have replaced relatively inexpensive items even when genuine, consumer products accounted for less than 4% of the total value of seized items, or just over $46 million.

4. Consumer electronics

FY 2017 seizures: 4,137

Pct. of total seizures: 12.1%

Value of seized goods: $85,115,639

Consumer electronics are essentially any electronic device intended for personal or home use, including phones and TVs, kitchen appliances, or grooming products. Many American homes have several such products, so consumer electronics is a big market for counterfeiters. Officials reported 4,137 seizures of counterfeit consumer electronics in 2017. More than 1,300 of those seizures came during a joint operation between CBP and the General Administration of China Customs. In total, counterfeit consumer electronics seized in 2017 would have been worth more than $85 million if genuine.

3. Footwear

FY 2017 seizures: 4,224

Pct. of total seizures: 12.3%

Value of seized goods: $41,490,429

Each year since 2014 there have been hundreds more seizures of counterfeit footwear. In 2014, CBP seized less than 1,300 intercepted shipments of bogus shoes. That number increased to 2,818 the next year, to 3,630 the year after, and to 4,224 in 2017. Those shipments would have been worth nearly $41.5 million if they were authentic. Though there were close to 600 additional seizures of counterfeit shoes in 2017 compared to the year before, the 2016 estimated MSRP of the counterfeit shoes was nearly $10 million higher.

2. Watches / jewelry

FY 2017 seizures: 4,297

Pct. of total seizures: 12.6%

Value of seized goods: $460,162,145

Counterfeit watches and jewelry were not the most commonly seized type of item in 2017, but they had the

highest market value. CBP reported 4,297 seizures of phony watches and jewelry that if authentic would have been worth over $460 million – over 38% of the total value of counterfeit items seized. Each intercepted shipment was worth an average of $107,089. Compared to 2016, watch and jewelry seizures increased by more than any other category. CBP intercepted 3,407 fake watch and jewelry shipments in 2016, 890 fewer than in 2017. Unlike many commonly counterfeited items, watches, rings, and other jewelry are relatively small yet quite expensive. This allows counterfeiters to maximize the value of goods smuggled in each shipment.

1. Wearing apparel / accessories

FY 2017 seizures: 5,223

Pct. of total seizures: 15.3%

Value of seized goods: $74,880,617

Wearing apparel and accessories again topped the list of America's most counterfeited items. CBP seized 5,223 shipments of counterfeit clothes, accounting for over 15% of all seized shipments. In the past seven years, wearing apparel and accessories has been the most seized category. In 2013, seizures peaked when CBP seized 9,894 shipments of fake clothing and accessories. The number of intercepted shipments declined in 2017 from 6,406 the year before, by far the largest drop of any category. The Super Bowl is one of the main targets for counterfeiters. Operation Team Player, an effort to curb counterfeit sports items, recovered a reported 24,324 items worth over $1 million just before the big game.

Detailed findings and methodology

Officials say that buying counterfeit items harms more than just the company whose products are imitated. The money from counterfeiting may fund much more serious crimes. Kevin Corsaro from the CBP Office of Field Operations said in a CBP informational video "The money that is made by counterfeiting is used to launder drugs, weapons, and a whole host of illegal activities."

Most counterfeit items seized while entering the United States come from Asia. Some 87% of seized counterfeit items came from China or Hong Kong. This data represents only where the goods were shipped from, not necessarily where they were made. But it is likely most of them came from China. The country leads the world in producing fake goods, accounting for over 60% of all counterfeit items globally.

There are several reasons for this. China is already a manufacturing hub, so it has people experienced in making products, from clothing to electronics. China's federal government has increased its efforts to prevent intellectual property infringement, with limited effect. As one of the largest countries in the world, it is nearly impossible to crack down on all counterfeiters, especially when political corruption in some areas make officials less inclined to do so.

There were more seizures of apparel and accessories than any other type of item. The 5,223 apparel and accessory seizures represented over 15% of total seizures. Counterfeit watches and jewelry were by far the most valuable items – or at least they were knockoffs of the most valuable items. Had the seized watches and jewelry been genuine, they would have been worth over $460 million, or more than 38% of the value of all seized items in the 2017 fiscal year.

This list is not all encompassing. Some 15% of seized shipments either did not fit into any CBP category or contained items that fit into multiple categories. Those shipments fell under the miscellaneous label "All others." It is also important to note that there is no way to know exactly how much counterfeit merchandise made it into the United States.

Counterfeit labels and tags were one of the most valuable items seized that were sorted into the "all others" category. These labels would have been used to add legitimacy to counterfeit clothing and accessories had they made it into the country. Those labels would have been worth nearly $81 million had they been genuine.

The CBP reported that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigation officials working to protect intellectual property rights made 457 arrests related to counterfeiting. Those arrests led to 288 indictments and 242 convictions.

Kevin Corsaro of the CBP Office of Field Operations said that buyers can typically avoid buying counterfeits by "knowing what the genuine article typically costs. If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is." Consumers can also avoid buying fakes by checking what the product looks like as well as its quality to ensure it meets the company's standards. They can help insulate themselves from fraudulent products by buying from reputable retailers and avoiding suspicious internet merchants.

In order to determine America's most counterfeited items, 24/7 Wall St. reviewed data provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a division of the Department of Homeland Security. Items were ranked based on the number of total seizures made in fiscal year 2017. Market values also came from CBP, which determined the value of the counterfeit goods based on the manufacturer's suggested retail price of the goods the counterfeit items were made to imitate.

– Grant Suneson, 24/7 Wall Street

24/7 Wall Street is a USA TODAY content partner offering financial news and commentary. Its content is produced independently of USA TODAY.

Amid Push To Expel Liberian War Criminals, Feds' Latest Philly Target Agrees To Leave U.S.

By Jeremy Roebuck

Philadelphia Inquirer, July 26, 2018

A Liberian refugee living in Southwest Philadelphia agreed Thursday to voluntarily leave the United States after becoming the latest target of federal investigators seeking justice for atrocities committed during the bloody civil war that gripped the West African nation in the 1990s.

Isaac T. Kannah, 51, admitted last year that he had lied about the role he played in the multifactional conflict in sworn testimony he gave in 2011 on behalf of a former wartime ally who faced deportation proceedings.

Kannah's sentence, approved Thursday by a federal judge in Rochester, N.Y., makes him the third member of the Philadelphia region's sizable Liberian expatriate community to be swept up this year in a push by U.S. investigators to root out and deport those involved in the many documented human rights violations that occurred during the fighting.

Despite atrocities committed on all sides, no one has ever been held accountable in Liberia in the two decades since the end of the conflict that left more than 250,000 Liberians dead and millions more displaced. Many former military commanders are now living in the United States amid the flood of asylum-seekers who were welcomed into Philadelphia and other cities at the height of the crisis.

Kannah — a self-described military attaché to the Liberia Peace Council, one of the many fighting factions – first came to the attention of federal authorities in 2011, when he was called as a defense witness in immigration proceedings for the group's former leader, George Boley.

Government lawyers had accused Boley, then working as an administrator in the Rochester school system, of lying about the fighting force he oversaw, which committed extrajudicial killings of civilians and conscripted children to serve as soldiers.

Kannah, however, challenged that portrayal on the witness stand and insisted that the LPC was not engaged in fighting during the war.

"I don't have any question in my mind," he said, according to transcripts. "I'm sure of what I'm saying."

But in an indictment filed shortly after Boley was deported in 2012, prosecutors in Rochester accused Kannah of lying, pointing to a statement he had given immigration investigators just months before his testimony. In it, he had boasted of himself and Boley as the victors in a 1994 guerrilla-style military campaign against rival warlord Charles Taylor. Prosecutors also accused the two men of fighting alongside child soldiers during the attack.

Kannah pleaded guilty last year to a lesser felony count, alleging he failed to notify authorities that he knew Boley had lied during the 2011 proceeding.

Few details of Kannah's life since the war's end were available Thursday. Neither he nor his attorney Jeffrey L. Ciccone returned calls for comment.

Court papers say only that Kannah arrived in the U.S. seeking asylum in 1997, shortly after Taylor was elected Liberia's president. Public records reveal few additional details except that he was living in Reading during Boley's court proceeding and moved to Philadelphia shortly afterward.

U.S. Homeland Security Investigations agents arrested Kannah in January 2017, around the time they were preparing for trial in cases against two of his countrymen living in the region.

One of those men – Jucontee Thomas Woewiyu, 73, of Collingdale, Delaware County — was convicted this month of lying on a 2006 application for U.S. citizenship about the role he played as Taylor's top lieutenant and spokesperson. He faces sentencing in October.

The other – Mohammed "Jungle Jabbah" Jabateh, 51, of East Lansdowne — is serving a 30-year prison term after a jury found him guilty last year of similarly deceiving authorities about his past as a vicious warlord who had committed numerous rapes, murders, and acts of cannibalism during the fighting.

Justice Department officials have described the cases against all four men – Boley, Kannah, Woewiyu, and Jabateh – as part of a broader U.S. effort to protect the nation's political asylum system from abuse and to provide Liberia's war victims with justice they have been denied in their own country.

Since the war's end, persistent calls for a homegrown war-crimes tribunal have gone unanswered by Liberia's elected leaders – some of whom were directly involved in the fighting.

Boley, for instance, returned home and went on to win a seat last year in Liberia's House of Representatives after his 2012 deportation.

Fort Myers Man Gets Five Years In Prison In National Telephone And Money Laundering Scam

By Michael Braun

Fort Myers (FL) News-Press, July 26, 2018

A Fort Myers man is heading to prison for five years after being sentenced for his part in a massive telephone impersonation fraud and money laundering scheme operated by a network of India-based call centers and responsible for defrauding U.S. residents of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Praful Patel, 50, accepted a plea deal for one count of conspiracy on July 19 in U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Texas. He also received three years of supervised release, and three other pending charges were dropped.

Twenty other members of the massive conspiracy were also sentenced to terms of imprisonment up to 20 years.

Patel entered a guilty plea in 2017 including one count of conspiracy to commit fraud and money laundering offenses.

Patel, who immigrated to the U.S. about 10 years ago, was arrested Oct. 26, 2016, at his home in the 16000 block of Whispering Trace Court in Colony Trace, near Winkler Road in south Fort Myers, during a series of nationwide raids by the Department of Homeland Security.

According to admissions made in pleas entered by Patel and other defendants, the men and co-conspirators perpetrated a complex scheme in which individuals from call centers in Ahmedabad, India, impersonated officials from the IRS and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and engaged in other telephone call scams, in a ruse designed to defraud victims throughout the United States.

Using information obtained from data brokers and other sources, call center operators targeted victims in the U.S. who were threatened with arrest, imprisonment, fines or deportation if they did not pay money allegedly owed to the U.S. government.

Victims who agreed to pay the scammers were instructed how to provide payment, including by purchasing general purpose reloadable cards or wiring money.

Upon payment, the call centers would immediately turn to a network of "runners" based in the U.S. to liquidate and launder the fraudulently obtained funds.

In his plea, Patel admitted that between 2013 and 2015 he was a domestic runner who liquidated funds in and around Fort Myers for conspirators from the India-based call center and organizational co-defendant HGLOBAL.

Patel communicated extensively via WhatsApp texts with his conspirators.

For a percentage commission on transactions he conducted, Patel admitted to purchasing reloadable cards that were registered using misappropriated personal identifying information of victims that were later used to receive victims' funds.

He would then use those reloadable cards to purchase money orders and deposit them into bank accounts as directed and use fake identity documents to receive wire transfers from victims.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration led the investigation.

Connect with this reporter: MichaelBraunNP (Facebook) @MichaelBraunNP (Twitter).

Marriage-fraud Ring Arranged 50 Sham Weddings In Brevard County, Feds Say

By Jeff Weiner

Orlando (FL) Sentinel, July 26, 2018

A marriage-fraud ring arranged at least 50 sham weddings in Brevard County over 18 months, linking immigrants from China, Russia, Ukraine and other countries with U.S. citizens willing to marry for money.

That's according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida, which on Thursday announced a guilty verdict against Valeriy Tsoy, a 35-year-old citizen of Kazakhstan.

According to prosecutors, Tsoy was living in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 2015 on an expired visa when she sought the aid of a "fraudulent wedding facilitator," identified as Dennis Yakovlev.

Tsoy traveled to Brevard County, paying $10,000 to marry a U.S. citizen and obtain immigration documents, prosecutors said.

According to federal prosecutors, Yakovlev admitted to organizing Tsoy's and other sham marriages, drawing immigrants from at least a dozen countries to the Space Coast for fake weddings.

The investigation began in 2015 when authorities noticed a "surge" in the number of people from ex-Soviet countries fraudulently marrying citizens in Brevard, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Yakovlev told authorities he typically made $1,000 to $2,000 for each marriage he arranged, while the American spouses got between $10,000 and $20,000, federal prosecutors said.

Tsoy is scheduled for sentencing Oct. 24.

Nine people have so far been convicted in the investigation.

jeweiner@orlandosentinel.com, 407-420-5171 or @JeffWeinerOS on Twitter

SECRET SERVICE

Duluth Man Sentenced For Participation In $1 Million International Email Scam

By Isabel Hughes

Gwinnett (GA) Daily Post, July 26, 2018

A 27-year-old Duluth man who pleaded guilty in federal court earlier this year of attempting to con his victims out of more than $1 million as part of an international email scam was recently sentenced for the crime, the Justice Department said Thursday.

Kerby Rigaud was sentenced to two years, three months in prison and ordered to pay more than $176,000 in restitution for his role as a "key player" in a business email compromise scam that impacted victims across the U.S. between April 2015 and April 2016, a Department of Justice news release said.

Rigaud pleaded guilty in March of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and money laundering.

"In numerous instances, victims, including those identified in the indictment as T.W., A.P., and J.L., received emails that purported to be from trusted sources, including banking representatives and closing agents," the release said. "The emails directed the victims to wire money to specific bank accounts, some of which were opened in the metro-Atlanta area."

Rigaud's co-conspirators sent the emails, the DOJ said, and sometimes hacked into victim's email accounts.

They also "spoofed" the email addresses, meaning they took steps to make the email appear as if it were sent by a trusted source, when, in reality, it was sent from a different account by a "malicious actor."

"Rigaud and his co-conspirators used cyberspace to organize a complex criminal scheme that crossed borders and defrauded numerous people right here in Georgia," said Kenneth Cronin, Special Agent in Charge of the Secret Service's Atlanta Field Office. "The United States Secret Service and our law enforcement partners will continue to place a high priority on investigating cases that take advantage of unsuspecting victims."

The DOJ also said Rigaud recruited "numerous individuals" who agreed to let him use their bank accounts to receive large wire transfers from victims.

After receiving the wires, Rigaud "directed his recruits on where to send the money, including to a number of financial institutions in Asia."

Investigators believe that Rigaud and his co-conspirators attempted to steal more than $1 million during the year-long scam.

"Business email compromise scams continue to inflict serious harm on our citizens and businesses," said U.S. Attorney BJay Pak. "We urge everyone to carefully scrutinize any emails they receive directing the transfer of money via wire. We will continue to pursue justice for the victims of this pernicious financial threat."

Judge Won't Order Disclosure Of Trump White House Visitor Logs

By Josh Gerstein

Politico, July 26, 2018

A federal judge has rejected a bid by several public interest groups to force release of a broad set of logs of visitors to the Trump White House.

In a ruling Thursday, U.S. District Court Judge Katherine Failla declined to depart from a 2013 federal appeals court decision that found visitor records for the Obama White House were not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

As a Manhattan-based judge, Failla was not obligated to follow the 2013 opinion from the D.C. Circuit, but most judges defer to that court on FOIA matters and she chose to do so in the legal fight over the White House logs.

The National Security Archive, the Knight First Amendment Institute and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington filed suit last year in an effort to get details on who was visiting the Trump White House, as well as other places frequented by the president, such as his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

Lawyers for the groups contended that the visitor records effectively belong to the Secret Service, which uses them to vet visitors and to admit them to the White House. However, Failla ruled that changes the Obama White House imposed on handling of the records in 2015 "reinforced the conclusion" that the records are presidential files beyond the reach of FOIA.

"The Secret Service's ability to utilize and dispose of these records is subject to constraints imposed by the White House that were not present" in 2013, Failla wrote in her 70-page opinion.

Failla, an Obama appointee, said that although core White House offices are entitled to keep their visitors secret, the Secret Service is still obligated to release visitor records for several parts of the Executive Office of the President that are subject to FOIA, like the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The Trump administration settled a similar lawsuit in February by agreeing to disclose many of the visits to those offices. Some such records began emerging in April, but there some ambiguity remained about how the settlement would be interpreted.

Knight Institute lawyer Alex Abdo expressed disappointment in Failla's decision.

"The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act is to expose the workings of our government to public scrutiny, and there are few records as important to that purpose as those showing who wields influence over the president," Abdo said via email Thursday night. "Although the court recognized that some visitor logs must be disclosed by the Executive Office of the President, we're disappointed the court did not order the release of the White House's visitor logs — a decision contrary both to FOIA and to the public interest."

An attorney for CREW, Anne Weismann, said her group was considering its options to respond to the ruling.

The Justice Department declined to comment, and the White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Efforts to seek details on Trump's visitors at Mar-a-Lago have been largely unsuccessful, with the Secret Service maintaining that there is little information on who saw him there, particularly during his early visits as president.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Shoddy IT Is Limiting FEMA's Ability To Respond To Disasters, IG Says

By Jack Corrigan
NextGov, July 26, 2018

Longstanding technology troubles at the Federal Emergency Management Agency could get in the way of the organization's disaster response efforts as hurricane season gets underway, according to the Homeland Security Department inspector general.

FEMA's outdated IT impedes the agency's ability to integrate systems across mission functions, manage disaster funds, share information with emergency management partners and coordinate disaster response efforts, according to John Kelly, the senior official performing the duties of the inspector general at DHS.

The shoddy tech infrastructure creates numerous delays in day-to-day operations, Kelly said, and it limits how quickly the agency can scale up to respond to major disasters. Employees are frequently left to create manual workarounds to conduct critical emergency response efforts, a process Kelly said wastes "considerable" time and money.

The Office of the Inspector General previously reported many of the existing issues to FEMA, but officials have yet to take action on the majority of the watchdog's recommendations, some of which date back to September 2005, just after Hurricane Katrina.

"Major disasters over the past number of years exposed numerous limitations in FEMA's IT infrastructure and system capabilities," Kelly said in his testimony before the House Homeland Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications. "Until FEMA provides the IT systems and capabilities needed to meet the demands posed by emergency management, timely response and recovery from disasters will be hindered, increasing the risk of delays in providing disaster assistance and grants."

OIG attributes FEMA's technological shortcomings to insufficient IT management. The agency is missing a strategic plan to guide IT programs and modernization efforts, and officials generally don't know what technologies they have at their disposal, Kelly said.

He added FEMA's chief information officer doesn't have the authority to guide enterprisewide tech projects and the agency largely lacks a governance process to guide IT acquisitions.

During the hearing, FEMA Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness Daniel Kaniewski said officials are working to address the IT issues with a newfound urgency in the wake of last year's devastating hurricanes and wildfires.

"We've embraced [the OIG] findings and are doing our best to implement them," said Daniel Kaniewski, FEMA's deputy administrator for national preparedness. "We can't fix them overnight but we're putting personnel and resources toward fixing them."

Still, OIG has yet to see FEMA increase its efforts to upgrade IT or make any specific tech improvements ahead of this year's hurricane season, OIG Senior Public Affairs Specialist Arlen Morales told Nextgov.

Last year, hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria together caused more than $265 billion in damages in the Caribbean and Southeast U.S., and FEMA is still actively involved in recovery efforts. As the 2018 hurricane season ramps up, Kaniewski said officials are working to better position personnel and resources in disaster-prone areas, but warned help can sometimes take a while to arrive and Americans need to do a better job preparing for emergencies.

"FEMA is not a first responder," he said. "FEMA cannot be there in the minutes, hours and sometimes days after a disaster."

COAST GUARD

Self-taught Businessman With No Engineering Credentials Designed Missouri Duck Boat, Records Say

By Kristine Phillips
Washington Post, July 26, 2018

The 17 people who were killed last week after a duck boat sank in Missouri were riding in an amphibious vehicle designed by a self-taught businessman who had no formal training in engineering or mechanics, according to court records.

Robert F. McDowell owned and ran Ride the Ducks in Branson, Mo., for nearly three decades. In the 1980s, he came up with the idea of redesigning the company's amphibious passenger vehicles by stretching them by 15 inches, and by the mid-1990s, Ride the Ducks was manufacturing what's called "stretch" duck boats, according to court filings from a pending lawsuit filed against the company over a fatal crash in Seattle. Fast-forward to 2018, one of those boats built based on McDowell's design, carrying 29 passengers and two crew members, sank to the bottom of Table Rock Lake amid torrential storms.

It remains unknown whether McDowell's design was a factor in the boat's sinking. A spokesman for the National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the accident, confirmed that the vehicle that sank was, in fact, a "stretch" boat and said its design and how it was built are part of the ongoing probe.

Ride the Ducks's boats, which the company said were replicas of World War II Army vehicles used in beach landings and were updated with modern safety equipment, and McDowell's lack of formal credentials have been a

concern among some lawyers in the last few years. Public officials also recently called into question the safety and structural integrity of the boats after the deaths of the 17 tourists in Branson last week.

McDowell did not have a degree or certification in engineering or mechanics. He spent 2 1/2 years as a pre-medicine student at Illinois Wesleyan University before moving to Branson in the 1970s to take over the management of Ozark Scenic Tours, which his father had bought and would later become Ride the Ducks, court records say. He educated himself on how to run the boat operation by talking to its previous owners, a high school football coach and a doctor, he said in a deposition as part of the Seattle lawsuit. He learned about mechanics and vehicle maintenance by spending a lot of time at auto shops.

In stretching the length of the duck boats, McDowell said he and his staff did research on businesses that use similar passenger vehicles. He visited Penske Trucks, U-Haul and United Parcel Service. No structural engineers were consulted, court records say.

"It was a journey and a gradual learning curve, and we continued to stay after it until we worked through the detail of it and developed it," McDowell said in the deposition.

McDowell, who is not a defendant in the Seattle lawsuit, did not return a call from The Washington Post on Wednesday. A spokeswoman for Ripley Entertainment, Ride the Ducks's parent company, did not answer emailed questions and, instead, referred The Post to a statement on the company's website saying that it cannot comment because of the pending investigation.

Karen Koehler, a lawyer who represents plaintiffs injured in a 2015 crash involving a Ride the Ducks boat and a charter bus in Seattle, said she had always assumed that building the amphibious vehicles required expertise from structural engineers.

The duck boat that sank in Table Rock Lake in Branson, Mo., is raised on Monday. The boat went down a few days earlier after a thunderstorm generated near-hurricane strength winds. (Nathan Papes/Springfield News-Leader via the Associated Press)

"I don't want to turn this man into a villain or anything like that," she said, referring to McDowell. "He had a vision and wanted this to happen and he made it happen … I just think, gosh, it would be like me practicing without a law license."

The crash in Seattle was caused by a faulty axle and not by the boat's design, Koehler said. But she said stretching the vehicles was a concern.

"Any time you alter something that basic in a vehicle, you change how the vehicle works, how it vibrates, how different things are stressed," she said.

Rain and 65 mph wind gusts pummeled the amphibious boat Thursday evening while it was on a sightseeing tour of the picturesque Ozarks lake. Gripping video footage showed the boat seesawing and lurching in unrelenting waves. The boat capsized, plunging 80 feet to the bottom. Fourteen people — fewer than half of the boat's occupants — survived.

Killed was the boat's driver, Branson resident Robert "Bob" Williams, 73, and tourists from four states. William Asher, 69; Rosemarie Hamann, 68; Janice Bright, 63; and William Bright, 65, were from Missouri. Steve Smith, 53; and Lance Smith, 15, were from Arkansas. Leslie Dennison, 64, was from Illinois.

The remaining nine victims were from Indiana, all members of the Coleman family: Angela, 45; Belinda, 69; Ervin 76; Glenn, 40; Horace, 70; Reece, 9; Eva, 7; Maxwell, 2; and Arya, 1. Tia Coleman, 34, and her nephew, Donovan, 13, survived.

Tia Coleman, who came to Branson with her family for their annual vacation, told reporters on Saturday that the boat company had suggested doing the "water part" of the tour before sightseeing on land because a storm was expected to roll in. The violent thunderstorm hit not long after the duck boat started out into the water.

Sitting near the front of the boat, Coleman began to worry when a giant wave crashed over the bow, she told reporters. She never heard anyone declare an emergency, she said, and the boat's captain told passengers they didn't need to use life jackets.

Coleman, a paralegal from Indianapolis, lost her husband and three children, ages 9, 7, and 1.

The deaths shook the community in Branson, where hundreds of residents had gathered for vigils for the victims. A spokeswoman for the Missouri attorney general said the agency is looking into whether any criminal charges are appropriate.

"The saddest thing about this is the people who went on this vehicle were doing it because they were having a great time. And that is probably a cruel irony of the situation," U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) said on the Senate floor on Tuesday.

McCaskill said the duck boats were a "sinking coffin" and called into question their "inherent dangers." She said she will introduce legislation that would require "design issues" of duck boats to be addressed. For example, she questioned whether duck boats should have a canopy that would trap passengers if the vehicles sink.

"These are not open vehicles. When they're in the water, it's almost like an enclosed bus. It's not a boat; it's a vehicle," McCaskill said.

[The violent storm behind the duck boat tragedy was well-predicted, not 'out of nowhere']

Chad Saylor, a spokesman for the U.S. Coast Guard, said the boat that sank was last inspected on Nov. 29. The Coast Guard, which looks at lifesaving gear, navigation

equipment, machinery and training of the crew, found the boat to be "fit for route and service," Saylor said.

Amphibious vehicles have so far been involved in at least 41 deaths in the United States and Canada since 1999. Five college students were killed in 2015 after a Ride the Ducks boat crashed into a charter bus on the Aurora Bridge in Seattle. Two were killed in a duck boat accident in 2010 in Philadelphia. Four were killed after a duck boat sank in 2002 in Ottawa. Another four died on the Miss Majestic in 1999 in Arkansas after they were pinned against the underside of the duck boat's canopy.

The year after the Seattle crash, the company agreed to pay $1 million for violating federal safety regulations, according to the Seattle Times.

According to court filings in the Seattle lawsuit, which alleges negligence, Ride the Ducks began to grow in the 1980s, with McDowell buying surplus Army Duck vehicles and parts around the country and remanufacturing the amphibious vehicles. Around the mid-1990s, McDowell began licensing and leasing Ride the Ducks vehicles in Boston and Seattle.

In 2001, McDowell sold a 50 percent share of the company to Herschend Family Entertainment. Three years later, Herschend bought the remaining shares and McDowell stayed on, first as a manager and then as a consultant, before leaving the company, court records say.

Ripley Entertainment bought the duck operation in 2017.

Mark Berman, Allyson Chiu and Emily Wax-Thibodeaux contributed to this article.

Heavy Polar Icebreaker Questions Mount For Coast Guard

By Andrew Jarocki

Defense News, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON — Potential funding woes and questions about the aggressive proposed timelines have cast doubts about the future of the Coast Guard's new heavy polar ice breaker.

The Government Accountability Office is dubious the service's lone heavy polar icebreaker can make it to its proposed 2023 retirement date and questioned whether the Coast Guard's construction schedule was too optimistic.

The Coast Guard is planing to replace the Polar Star with the new heavy icebreaker the same year, something GAO said may not be "realistic and feasible."

The watchdog noted the aging Polar Star could reach the end of its service life as soon as 2020, and the "highly optimistic" delivery date of the new vessel could be delayed and leave the service without a heavy polar icebreaker to defend strategic Arctic interests for several years.

Vice Adm. Daniel Abel, deputy commandant for operations, recently told the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee at a hearing that the Polar Star is "limping along, and nothing with a US flag could rescue her [in the Arctic] if something happened, putting our polar capabilities at risk."

To further complicate matters, House appropriators are currently debating cutting $750 million in funding for the Coast Guard.

Vice Adm. Michael McAllister, deputy commandant for mission support, said at the hearing that the entire program schedule is at risk if the appropriations cut is finalized but that he remained confident that the Coast Guard is "well-poised to award the detailed construction contract in fiscal year 2019" for the heavy polar ice breaker.

About Andrew Jarocki

Andrew is a student in the class of 2020 at the University of Notre Dame.

CYBER NEWS

Report: China, Russia And Iran Ramp Up Economic Spying On US

By Deb Riechmann

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Chinese cyberespionage group called APT10 relentlessly attacks U.S. engineering, telecom and aerospace industries. Russian hackers last year compromised dozens of U.S. energy companies. Iranian hackers known as "Rocket Kitten" repeatedly target American defense companies in hopes of stealing information to boost Tehran's missile and space programs.

While Moscow's efforts to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election are widely known, spy services from China, Russia and Iran, along with their proxy hackers, also are hard at work trying to steal trade secrets and proprietary information from the United States, according to a government report released Thursday. A classified version of the report was sent to Congress.

"Foreign economic and industrial espionage against the United States continues to represent a significant threat to America's prosperity, security and competitive advantage," the National Counterintelligence and Security Center said. "China, Russia and Iran stand out as three of the most capable and active cyber actors tied to economic espionage and the potential theft of U.S. trade secrets and proprietary information."

Cyberespionage is a relatively low-cost, high-yield way to access and acquire information from U.S. research institutions, universities and corporations, the report said. More vulnerabilities will emerge with the increase in cloud computing, artificial intelligence and the proliferation of

vehicles, home appliances, medical devices and other items connected to the internet.

Cyberoperations are the preferred method for conducting economic espionage, the report said, but U.S. adversaries also acquire sensitive information by hiring sophisticated hackers, recruiting spies or gleaning material from foreign students studying at American universities.

Adversaries also are infiltrating computer networks of suppliers that serve large companies and then using that connection to worm their way up the chain into large corporate computer systems. Bill Evanina, the nation's top counterintelligence official and director of the center, told reporters at a briefing that business leaders need to investigate the security of computer systems used by companies that supply their air conditioning and heating, printers and copiers and the like.

"Our economic security is our national security," Evanina said "We cannot just get numb to our adversaries stealing our intellectual property."

The report listed two dozen technologies that have piqued the interest of foreign intelligence collectors. They include oil, gas and coal-bed methane gas energies; smart grids; solar and wind technologies; biopharmaceuticals and new vaccines and drugs; defensive marine systems and radar; hybrid and electric cars; pollution control; high-end computer numerically controlled machines, which are used to control factory tools and machines in manufacturing; space infrastructure and exploration technology; synthetic rubber; rare earth materials; quantum computing; and next generation broadband wireless communications networks.

Michael Moss, deputy director of the government's Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center, said incidents of economic espionage are growing rapidly. "The thing that continues to surprise me is how fast it continues to accelerate. It's getting faster and faster," he said.

China uses joint ventures to try to acquire technical know-how, the report said. It said Beijing seeks partnerships with U.S. government labs to learn about specific technology and information about running such facilities and uses front companies to hide the hand of the Chinese government and acquire technology under U.S. export controls.

The Trump administration has railed against China, imposed new tariffs and called for Beijing to end the theft of intellectual property from U.S. companies. The administration also wants China to curb policies that require American and other foreign businesses to hand over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese market.

"If this threat is not addressed, it could erode America's long-term competitive economic advantage," the report said.

Economic espionage conducted by hackers linked to Russia is mostly aimed at finding ways to inflict damage on the United States, disrupt services or benefit its economic interests, according to the report.

"In support of that goal, Russian intelligence services have conducted sophisticated and large-scale hacking operations to collect sensitive U.S. business and technology information," the report said. It also said that Russian "military modernization efforts also likely will be a motivating factor for Russia to steal U.S intellectual property."

Iranian's operations have typically targeted adversaries in the Middle East, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. But it also tries to infiltrate U.S. networks to acquire technologies to bolster economic growth, modernize its military and increase exports.

"The loss of sensitive information and technologies not only presents a significant threat to U.S. national security," the report said. "It also enables Tehran to develop advanced technologies to boost domestic economic growth, modernize its military forces and increase its foreign sales."

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

These 3 Countries Pose The Biggest Cyber Threats, U.S. Officials Say

Fortune, July 26, 2018

China, Russia and Iran pose the biggest threats of computer attacks to spy on U.S. companies and steal their trade secrets, according to a report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The three countries have conducted sophisticated, large-scale hacking attacks across multiple U.S. industries, targeting the networks of technology and manufacturing contractors, defense contractors and utilities, according to the 20-page report compiled by office's National Counterintelligence and Security Center.

"Our economic security is our national security," William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, told reporters during a briefing Thursday. "We cannot just get numb to our adversaries stealing our intellectual property and trade secrets."

There's no sign the cyber thefts will stop.

"We anticipate that China, Russia, and Iran will remain aggressive and capable collectors of sensitive U.S. economic information and technologies, particularly in cyberspace," the intelligence center said. in the report "All will almost certainly continue to deploy significant resources and a wide array of tactics to acquire intellectual property and proprietary information."

A new threat is that hackers are infiltrating corporate networks while software code is being written, Evanina said. That lets the hackers insert malware into the code from the start that will stay as it's used by consumers and updated. Russia

Russian government hackers compromised dozens of U.S energy companies in 2017, including their operational networks, according to the report.

"The threat to U.S. technology from Russia will continue over the coming years as Moscow attempts to bolster an economy struggling with endemic corruption, state control, and a loss of talent departing for jobs abroad," the counterintelligence center said. China

Most Chinese cyberattacks against U.S. industry are focused on defense contractors and technology and communications companies "whose products and services support government and private sector networks worldwide," according to the report.

China reached an agreement with the U.S. in 2015 to stop conducting digital economic espionage. Attacks from China have lessened since then but still continue, the counterintelligence center said. Iran

Iran is described as taking a noticeable turn in 2017 toward targeting U.S. networks, as it seeks to expand industries unrelated to oil.

"We believe that Iran will continue working to penetrate U.S. networks for economic or industrial espionage purposes," according to the report. "Iran's economy — still driven heavily by petroleum revenue — will depend on growth in non-oil industries, and we expect Iran will continue to exploit cyberspace to gain advantages in these industries."

Looking ahead, the counterintelligence office said software vulnerabilities will continue to let hackers insert malicious code into U.S. networks.

Additionally, new laws put in place by other countries might require U.S. companies to submit their software code for security reviews or store their data locally in the host country.

"A range of other potentially disruptive threats warrant attention," the counterintelligence agency said. "Cyber threats will continue to evolve with technological advances in the global information environment." Attached Media

U.S. Intel Cites China, Russia, Iran As "Aggressive" Perpetrators Of Cyber Espionage

By Olivia Gazis

CBS News, July 26, 2018

In the latest of a series of intensifying warnings about cyber threats issued by the U.S. intelligence community, a new report says that China, Russia and Iran stand out as the three most hostile foreign actors to engage in economic espionage and in stealing proprietary secrets from American companies and corporations, noting that emerging technologies could expose some companies to previously unknown threats.

"We anticipate that China, Russia and Iran will remain aggressive and capable collectors of sensitive U.S. economic information and technologies, particularly in cyberspace," said the report, which was issued by the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) and compiled with input from more than a dozen intelligence agencies. "All will almost certainly continue to deploy significant resources and a wide array of tactics to acquire intellectual property and proprietary information."

The NCSC, which last issued an unclassified report on the matter in 2011, said new, increasingly pervasive technologies like artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things – as it expands from "smart homes" to "smart cities" – may lay bare novel vulnerabilities for which the U.S. cyber security community is unprepared.

"Despite advances in cybersecurity," the report said, "cyber espionage continues to offer threat actors a relatively low-cost, high-yield avenue of approach to a wide spectrum of intellectual property."

As it has in previous years, the report noted that some countries with "closer ties to the United States" also engage in cyber espionage to obtain U.S. technology, though it did not identify those countries.

The report did identify six industries it said were of particularly high interest to foreign intelligence collectors, including energy, biotechnology, and defense sectors, as well as environmental protection, high-end manufacturing and information technologies industries.

Even as companies have hardened their defenses via increasingly sophisticated cybersecurity services, the report said, hackers and hostile actors have turned to software supply chain infiltration to conduct cyber espionage and engage in information theft and other organizational disruption.

"Last year represented a watershed in the reporting of software supply chain operations," the report said, with seven significant events reported in the public domain in 2017 alone, versus four previously reported between 2014 and 2016.

Among the examples cited in the report was an incident in 2017 that involved a common type of security software called CCleaner. It was loaded with a backdoor by hackers who ultimately penetrated hundreds of thousands of computers in an effort to access the networks of tech giants like Microsoft, Google, Samsung, Sony and Cisco.

New, restrictive cyber security and import laws passed by some foreign countries also pose risks to U.S. companies looking to conduct business overseas, the report said. In 2017 China mandated that foreign companies submit to government-administered national security reviews, and to store their data in China. Russia has begun requiring all foreign technologies to undergo source code reviews by its top security agency, the FSB, before being approved for sale.

Both countries, the report said, "could exploit these laws to significantly improve their access to the intellectual property of foreign companies operating in their countries and subsequently share this sensitive information with domestic firms."

Similarly, foreign technology companies with a links to their host governments – as with Russia's Kaspersky Lab products, which were removed from all U.S. federal departments in late 2017 – were also cited as latent threats. The access to computers and networks the products often gain, the report said, also present an opportunity for countries to obtain sensitive information.

Though the countries cited by the report have long been known by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies to engage in information theft and espionage, in recent weeks public warnings about their activities have increased.

At the Aspen Security Forum last week, FBI Director Christopher Wray said that "China, from a counterintelligence perspective, in many ways represents the broadest, most challenging, most significant threat we face as a country," citing both its cyber means and human sources. "The volume of it, the pervasiveness of it, the significance of it is something that I think this country cannot underestimate," he said.

Earlier this month, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned that foreign actors like Russia, China, Iran and North Korea were daily conducting a range of attacks against a variety of targets, including U.S. businesses, federal, state and local governments, academic and financial institutions, and the country's critical infrastructure.

The NCSC report likewise stressed that non-business entities were far from exempt. "Federal research institutions, universities, and corporations are regularly targeted by online actors seeking all manner of proprietary information," the report said, "and the overall long-term trend remains worrisome."

Chinese Theft Continues In Cyberspace As New Threats Emerge, U.S. Intelligence Officials Warn

By Shane Harris

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

China continues to steal intellectual property and trade secrets from U.S. companies for its own economic advancement and the development of its military but "at lower volumes" since the two countries forged an agreement in 2015 meant to curb the practice, according to a report published Thursday by American intelligence agencies.

The assessment, which also incorporates the findings of private sector security experts, comes amid roiling trade tension between the U.S. and China that has spawned dueling tariffs on billions of dollars worth of goods. It is unlikely to quell concerns from the White House that China continues to pose a significant threat to American companies.

The report shows that China mounts a multifaceted approach to stealing secrets, which include computer software source codes, chemical formulas, and technology that can be used in weapons systems. Though it relies on computer hacking, China also acquires technology and know-how through joint ventures and purchases of companies, academic and research partnerships, and front companies meant to "obscure the hand of the Chinese government" in order to acquire technologies governed by U.S. export controls, the report found.

The findings were published by the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, part of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which oversees all U.S. spy agencies.

In 2015, after the Obama administration threatened to impose sanctions on China, both countries agreed to refrain from conducting cyber operations for economic advancement. The deal was mostly one-sided, as the United States doesn't steal proprietary information and technology from other countries' for its own economic advancement, intelligence and security officials have said. (The U.S. does steal for political and strategic purposes.)

The report shows that while some progress has been made curbing Chinese economic espionage, its cyber operations continue and are focused on defense contractors or information technology and communications companies that provide products and services to support government and private sector information networks.

"We believe that China will continue to be a threat to U.S. proprietary technology and intellectual property through cyber-enabled means or other methods," according to the report. "If this threat is not addressed, it could erode America's long-term competitive economic advantage."

Intelligence officials are increasingly concerned about an emerging threat in which attackers target software manufacturers and distributors, rather than individual users. In these so-called "supply chain" attacks, software is manipulated — perhaps to install a backdoor for hackers to enter later — before it is installed or updated on a computer. The attacks can affect millions of people who download the software, often from sources they trust.

Recent evidence suggests the problem is pervasive and that companies are unprepared to manage it. Two-thirds of respondents in a survey commissioned this month by computer security company CrowdStrike said their organizations had experienced a supply-chain attack, with 90 percent of those incurring some financial cost.

The intelligence report called 2017 "a watershed in the reporting of software supply chain operations." Last year, seven "significant events" were publicly reported, compared to four between 2014 and 2016, the report found.

"Hackers are clearly targeting software supply chains to achieve a range of potential effects to include cyber espionage, organizational disruption, or demonstrable financial impact," the report said.

Among the most notable incidents cited by intelligence officials is one that affected a popular tool used to delete unwanted and potentially dangerous files from personal computers. More than one million computers downloaded an infected version of the program, CCleaner, which hackers then used to target technology companies, including Samsung, Sony and Intel, according to researchers.

Security analysts have found evidence they think links the attack to Chinese hackers, whom they believe broke into a British software maker to corrupt the popular CCleaner program.

Hackers also infiltrated software supply chains to conduct a devastating attack last year in Ukraine. The CIA has attributed that attack to Russian military hackers, who used a virus called NotPetya to delete information from computers used by banks, energy firms, senior government officials and an airport. The attack crippled Ukraine's financial system during a war with separatists loyal to Moscow.

The attack had significant financial costs to companies, including FedEx and Maersk, which each suffered $300 million in damages, the intelligence report said.

The report warns that new laws and inspection regimes in foreign countries pose a risk to American firms.

Last year, China began requiring foreign companies to submit communications technology to a government-administered national security review. Companies that operate in China also must store their data there, which exposes it to government influence, the report noted.

Russia also "has dramatically increased its demand for source code reviews for foreign technology being sold inside the country," the report said.

The report singles out Russia and Iran as malign actors intent on penetrating U.S. computer systems and critical infrastructure.

Russia aims to use cyber espionage "to bolster an economy struggling with endemic corruption, state control, and a loss of talent departing for jobs abroad," the report said. Russian hackers have stolen intellectual property from U.S. health care and technology companies, and last year compromised operational networks at energy companies, the report found.

Iran targets American firms as part of what the report calls "a subset" of offensive cyber operations mostly focused on Israel and Saudi Arabia.

For instance, an Iranian hacker group called Rocket Kitten "consistently targets U.S. defense firms, likely enabling Tehran to improve its already robust missile and space programs with proprietary and sensitive U.S. military technology," the report said. Iranians are also targeting aerospace and civil aviation firms, financial institutions, and energy sector companies.

To combat old and evolving threats, the U.S. government is taking a range of actions, including trying to collaborate more with business and computer security experts to stay abreast of threats and either stop them from happening or manage the fallout.

The report said that the U.S. will continue to use other countermeasures including attributing attacks to particular countries, diplomatic demarches, economic sanctions and law enforcement actions.

In recent years, the Justice Department has indicted foreign citizens for computer hacking. And while many of those accused aren't likely to see the inside of an American courtroom, some experts believe the legal actions have had a deterrent effect particularly in China, where the national government has come to realize that to be taken seriously as a world economic power, it has to curtail its aggressive economic espionage.

China, Russia, Iran Top Cyber Threats, U.S. Intelligence Finds

By Chris Strohm

Bloomberg News, July 27, 2018

China, Russia and Iran pose the biggest threats of computer attacks to spy on U.S. companies and steal their trade secrets, according to a report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The three countries have conducted sophisticated, large-scale hacking attacks across multiple U.S. industries, targeting the networks of technology and manufacturing contractors, defense contractors and utilities, according to the 20-page report compiled by office's National Counterintelligence and Security Center.

"Our economic security is our national security," William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, told reporters during a briefing Thursday. "We cannot just get numb to our adversaries stealing our intellectual property and trade secrets."

There's no sign the cyber thefts will stop.

"We anticipate that China, Russia, and Iran will remain aggressive and capable collectors of sensitive U.S. economic information and technologies, particularly in cyberspace," the intelligence center said. in the report "All will almost certainly continue to deploy significant resources and a wide array of tactics to acquire intellectual property and proprietary information."

A new threat is that hackers are infiltrating corporate networks while software code is being written, Evanina said. That lets the hackers insert malware into the code from the start that will stay as it's used by consumers and updated.

Russia

Russian government hackers compromised dozens of U.S energy companies in 2017, including their operational networks, according to the report.

"The threat to U.S. technology from Russia will continue over the coming years as Moscow attempts to bolster an economy struggling with endemic corruption, state control, and a loss of talent departing for jobs abroad," the counterintelligence center said.

China

Most Chinese cyberattacks against U.S. industry are focused on defense contractors and technology and communications companies "whose products and services support government and private sector networks worldwide," according to the report.

China reached an agreement with the U.S. in 2015 to stop conducting digital economic espionage. Attacks from China have lessened since then but still continue, the counterintelligence center said.

Iran

Iran is described as taking a noticeable turn in 2017 toward targeting U.S. networks, as it seeks to expand industries unrelated to oil.

"We believe that Iran will continue working to penetrate U.S. networks for economic or industrial espionage purposes," according to the report. "Iran's economy – still driven heavily by petroleum revenue – will depend on growth in non-oil industries, and we expect Iran will continue to exploit cyberspace to gain advantages in these industries."

Looking ahead, the counterintelligence office said software vulnerabilities will continue to let hackers insert malicious code into U.S. networks.

Additionally, new laws put in place by other countries might require U.S. companies to submit their software code for security reviews or store their data locally in the host country.

"A range of other potentially disruptive threats warrant attention," the counterintelligence agency said. "Cyber threats will continue to evolve with technological advances in the global information environment."

China Is Still Stealing America's Business Secrets, US Officials Say

By Patrick Tucker

Defense One, July 26, 2018

U.S. intellectual property remains a "critical" threat, with perpetrators who have adapted to evade the strictures of a three-year-old ban on such hacking, according to a top-secret report intelligence officials sent j to Congress this week..

It wasn't supposed to be this way. In 2015, the U.S. and China signed an agreement to curb Chinese economic espionage over the Internet. That produced a "lull" in Chinese cyber theft, but did not stop it, William Evanina, the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, told reporters Thursday. As the digital ecosystem continues to expand so does the threat posed by Chinese industrial cyber theft to America's long-term economic power.

Evanina's office made a shorter, unclassified version of the report available to journalists and to the public. It lists a variety of known cases of recent Chinese economic espionage, as well as other prepetrators of cyber economic espionage. But officials both during their briefing and in their report highlighted China.

"Most Chinese cyber operations against U.S. private industry that have been detected are focused on cleared defense contractors or IT and communications firms whose products and services support government and private sector networks worldwide," it reads.

One such product, the report says, is CCleaner, a popular consumer application that removes unwanted files from computers. Chinese cyber actors penetrated its production process and pasted malicious code into the application before it shipped, potentially compromising the computers of its 2.3 million customers.

"We are not prepared as a nation to deal with the supply chain threat, holistically," said Evanina.

"We believe that China will continue to be a threat to U.S. proprietary technology and intellectual property through cyber-enabled means or other methods. If this threat is not addressed, it could erode America's long-term competitive economic advantage," says the nonclassified version of the report.

Among the industries in which China and other foreign nations have the most interest are: energy and alternative energy; biotechnology; defense technology; environmental protection; a high-end manufacturing, and information and communications technology.

Evanina said the good news is that detection and reporting of cyber espionage has gotten much faster than it was a few years ago.

"Last year represented a watershed in the reporting of software supply chain operations. In 2017, seven significant events were reported in the public domain compared to only four between 2014 and 2016. As the number of events grows, so too are the potential impacts," notes the report.

Michael Moss, the deputy director of the Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center, noted that reporting still isn't keeping up with rapidly adapting hackers. "They'll surprise me with how quickly they'll move… how fast it continues to accelerate."

The other piece of good news in the officials' estimates: only a tiny slice of the exploits and vulnerabilities that hackers are using to conduct economic espionage are fancy zero-days that no one has ever seen, the sorts of bugs that you need a gymnasium full of cracker-jack military hackers to find. In fact, most are bugs and vulnerabilities that the public, and

network managers, should already know about because they're on the National Vulnerabilities Database, a massive public list of software bugs maintained by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Software manufacturers will usually issue patches once a vulnerability in their software shows up on the list. But it's up to individual

IT managers at different companies and enterprises to then make sure that every machine is up to do date on all those patches.

A case in point, though not related to industrial espionage, the WannaCry attacks that crippled hospitals in 2017. Microsoft issued a patch in March, but slow adoption allowed the worst attacks to occur in June.

It's one big reason Evanina is reaching out to Congress, and to industry, which owns the treasured and the buggy machines that make it vulnerable.

Patching continues to be "problematic," he said, urging industry leaders to move toward "an enterprise-level solution."

China, Russia, Iran Pose Grave Cyber Espionage Threat: Government Report

By Morgan Chalfant

The Hill, July 26, 2018

Hackers from China, Russia and Iran have been consistently stealing U.S. trade secrets, posing a significant and growing threat to the United States, a new government report says.

"Foreign economic and industrial espionage against the United States continues to represent a significant threat to America's prosperity, security, and competitive advantage," the report from the National Counterintelligence and Security Center released on Thursday states.

"Foreign intelligence services — and threat actors working on their behalf — continue to represent the most persistent and pervasive cyber intelligence threat."

China, Russia, and Iran, the document says, "stand out as three of the most capable and active cyber actors tied to economic espionage and the potential theft of U.S. trade secrets and proprietary information."

The report highlights several cyber operations based in the three countries that have threatened U.S. firms and interests, including an ongoing operation in which an Iranian hacker group named "Rocket Kitten" targets U.S.-based defense firms to bolster its missile and space programs.

The government document rehashes much of what those in the security community have acknowledged publicly — that hackers linked to governments in these three countries pose a grave and consistent threat to American companies.

It's conclusions, however, are notable, particularly given the landmark accord struck between Washington and Beijing in 2015 during the Obama administration to stop conducting cyber-enabled economic espionage against companies in one another's borders.

It also comes as U.S. lawmakers express growing concerns over threats from foreign actors looking to gain an edge over the United States in military technology or other areas.

The report acknowledges that China "continues to use cyber espionage to support its strategic development goals — science and technology advancement, military modernization, and economic policy objectives." However, it notes that the intelligence community and security professionals have observed espionage activity at "lower volumes" since 2015.

Officials also name Iran as an "increasing" cyber threat — a judgment in line with analysts who have observed Tehran-linked hackers growing more sophisticated in their tactics and expanding their operations in recent months.

Nations with "closer ties" to the U.S. also engage in cyber espionage to target U.S. technology secrets, the report says, without naming specific allied nations or partners.

"We anticipate that China, Russia, and Iran will remain aggressive and capable collectors of sensitive U.S. economic information and technologies, particularly in cyberspace," the report says.

"All will almost certainly continue to deploy significant resources and a wide array of tactics to acquire intellectual property and proprietary information."

US Warns Of Supply Chain Cyber-attacks

BBC News Online (UK), July 26, 2018

The US intelligence community has issued a new warning about cyber-espionage risks posed by attacks made via the technology supply chain.

A report said China, Russia and Iran were the most capable and active states involved in such economic subterfuge.

Software supply chain infiltration had already threatened critical infrastructure, it warned, and was poised to imperil other sectors.

It added that sensitive data owned by US bodies had been put at risk.

The Foreign Economic Espionage Report was published by the US's National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC).

It said that last year marked a "watershed", with seven significant software supply chain events having been made public.

By comparison, only four such incidents had been widely reported between 2014 and 2016, it said.'Key threat'

The concern is that attackers are looking for new ways to exploit computer networks via the privileged access given to technology providers.

"Software supply chain infiltration is one of the key threats that corporations need to pay attention to, particularly

how software vulnerabilities are exploited," William Evanina, the NCSC's director and the US's top counter-intelligence official, told the BBC.

"To get around increasingly hardened corporate perimeters, cyber-actors are targeting supply chains.

"The impacts to proprietary data, trade secrets, and national security are profound."

The report highlights a number of attacks.

They include the spread of a booby-trapped version of CCleaner – a computer-cleaning program – which was revealed last September.

This worked by inserting malicious code into the software to take advantage of the access it enjoyed.

Millions of machines were infected, but the report said hackers had "specifically targeted" 18 companies to conduct espionage including Samsung, Asus, Intel, VMware, O2 and Fujitsu.Lost millions

The attacks can also have disruptive effects as well as being used to steal information.

The use of accountancy software to target Ukraine in the so-called NotPetya attack is another example of where a software supply chain was compromised.

The software was used to file tax returns in Ukraine.

Hackers – alleged to be from Russia – implanted malicious code that wiped machines of data. It spread well beyond Ukraine via many companies that did business in the country, leading to hundreds of millions of dollars of damages.

Supply chain attacks have the potential to hit many different machines through one single compromise and can be harder to detect than traditional malware attacks.Backdoor breaches

Another flagged case involved software from South Korean based firm Netsarang, which had been corrupted with a backdoor. This was in turn used to target hundreds of companies in the energy, financial services, manufacturing, telecoms, transport and pharmaceutical sectors.

Kingslayer was also discussed. The malware operation targeted administrator accounts to install backdoors that provided access to sensitive parts of a target's network.

The report said that while it was not known how many firms were ultimately infected, "at least one US defence contractor was targeted and compromised".

In the past week, cyber-security company Crowdstrike also published the results of a survey it had commissioned. Two-thirds of the organisations that responded said they had experienced a software supply chain attack in the past 12 months.

The average cost of an attack was more than $1.1m (£838,000).Kaspersky Lab

The US report also raised concerns about foreign technology companies with close links to their domestic governments. It pointed to new laws and regulations in Russia and China, which require reviews of source code.

"New foreign laws and increased risks posed by foreign technology companies due to their ties to host governments, may present US companies with previously unforeseen threats," the report said.

It also noted last September's Department of Homeland Security directive telling US federal agencies and departments to remove Kaspersky Lab products because of the company's link to Russia.

Kaspersky Lab software has broad and privileged access to machines to scan for viruses, but the company has always denied any use of this access for espionage on behalf of the Russian state.

How China, Russia, Iran Target US With Economic Espionage

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) – China, Russia and Iran are ramping up their theft of trade secrets and proprietary information from U.S. companies, government labs and universities to hurdle America's competitive edge.

A new government cyber report, released Thursday by the National Counterintelligence Security Center, offers these recent examples of the economic espionage it says poses a significant threat to U.S. prosperity and security:

___

CHINA

-In November, three Chinese nationals were accused of operating a cybersecurity firm that used phishing scams and malware to steal data from international corporations. A federal indictment unsealed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, said the trio's targets included Siemens AG, Moody's Analytics in New York and Trimble Inc. in Sunnyvale, California.

-Cybersecurity experts found links between Chinese cyber actors and a back door that allowed entry into commercial software known as CCleaner. This back door allowed them to target U.S. companies, including Google, Microsoft, Intel and VMware.

-In November, PricewaterhouseCoopers reported that another China-based hacker group, known as KeyBoy, was moving beyond targets in Asia to conduct cyber snooping on Western corporations.

-Chinese cyberespionage actors, known as TEMP.Periscope, continued to target the maritime industry and U.S. research institutions, academic organizations and private firms that are focused on engineering. FireEye, a California security research firm, has detected sharp increases in this group's targeting early this year.

-Last year, the China-linked cyberespionage group APT10 was involved in widespread operations to target

engineering, telecommunications and aerospace industries across the globe, including the U.S.

____

RUSSIA

-In 2016, a hacker known as Eas7, told Western news reporters that she had collaborated with the Russian Federal Security Service, formerly the KGB, on economic espionage missions. She estimated that "among the good hackers, at least half" work for government agencies, suggesting that Moscow employs cyber criminals so they can deny being behind the operations.

-Russian government hackers last year compromised dozens of U.S. energy firms, including their operational networks. The operations were conducted to collect intelligence, gain access so the hackers could later launch service disruptions and provide sensitive U.S. intellectual property to Russian companies.

-The Russian state-sponsored cyberoperation known as APT28 has been gathering intelligence on U.S. and European defense and geopolitical issues since at least 2007. Obtaining sensitive U.S. defense industry data could give Russia economic and security advantages as it seeks to strengthen and modernize its military.

___

IRAN

-An Iranian hacker group called Rocket Kitten has been targeting U.S. defense companies seeking sensitive U.S. military technology to help Tehran improve its missile and space programs.

-The Iranian OilRig hacking group, which historically has targeted Saudi Arabia, has stepped up its attacks on U.S. financial institutions and information technology companies.

-The Iranian hacking outfit called APT33 has targeted energy companies to help improve Iran's petrochemical production and technology.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

DHS Plots Multiple Cyber Initiatives

A daily briefing on politics and cybersecurity

By Tim Starks

Politico, July 26, 2018

COMING ATTRACTIONS — DHS will use its upcoming cybersecurity summit to reassert its leadership role in federal cyber efforts, a senior department official said in an interview. "We will launch at least three noteworthy new ideas and initiatives" with 90-day timelines for producing results, Christopher Krebs, the under secretary of DHS's cyber wing, the National Protection and Programs Directorate, said on the inaugural episode of CyberCast, a new cybersecurity podcast co-hosted by Kiersten Todt and Roger Cressey. One announcement at the July 31 event in New York will focus on supply chain security, as part of DHS's effort to reframe how it approaches cyber risk management. The department will also encourage a greater focus on the security of industrial control systems. Krebs called these utility control networks "a space from a risk perspective that needs quite a bit of attention."

DHS is also pushing a more integrated public-private approach to cybersecurity than the U.S. has used since the emergence of technology security issues. In countries like the United Kingdom, the government plays a large role in protecting private systems, but that approach has not prevailed in the U.S. because of longstanding concerns about federal overreach. On CyberCast, Krebs talked about an "integrated civilian, defense and private sector" strategy for U.S. cybersecurity. "It has to be a coordinated, integrated approach," he said, "or we're not going to be successful."

HOUSE OVERSIGHT HEARING REVEALS FUTURE — The federal government has worked through more than half the IT modernization goals set forth in a late 2017 report, the nation's chief information officer told the House Oversight panel Wednesday. Of the tasks in the report, "37 of those 52 tasks have been completed, many of them ahead of schedule, and we intend to complete the remaining tasks by the end of the year," Suzette Kent said in her prepared statement. She also outlined some other forthcoming priorities: "We're delivering new policies for high-value assets, data centers, continuous monitoring, cloud technologies and network optimization in the next coming months."

At the same hearing, the comptroller general of the Government Accountability Office said his organization would examine the Trump administration's decision to eliminate the White House cybersecurity coordinator position. "I haven't had a chance, since it's a recent activity, to look into it more," said Gene Dodaro, who said he was "surprised" and "concerned about" the call. "We plan to do that in the future, so once we look into it and see how they're planning to approach it with the elimination of that position, I'll be in a better position to advise the Congress on what to do." It's not an area the GAO has paid much attention to, he said. "We've never really evaluated the cybersecurity coordinator role," Dodaro told the panel. "So I haven't really examined fully what that position did, what kind of resources they had available and what their accomplishments were during that period of time." A GAO spokesman said the exact form of the examination would be determined after consulting with Congress.

HAPPY THURSDAY and welcome to Morning Cybersecurity! It seems pretty obvious that the dog was nice. Send your thoughts, feedback and especially tips to tstarks@politico.com, and be sure to follow @POLITICOPro and @MorningCybersec. Full team info below.

Playbook On The Road: Where are you reading Playbook this summer? Tweet pictures of you and others

reading Playbook on your summer getaways to #PlaybookLoyal or email them to daniel@politico.com for the chance to be featured in Playbook on Friday each week this summer. Learn more at politico.com/playbookontheroad.

FIRST IN MC — New America is out today with a policy report that examines the tensions between the so-called "idealized internet" that has been espoused by liberal and Democratic countries in their cyber strategies and the "internet reality" that has developed as countries like Russia, China and Iran have molded the online world to their rules. "The goal of this framework is to help build greater understanding of where the current internet departs from the idealized version in liberal-democratic foreign policy," the think tank's study states. The purpose "is not to highlight contradictions for the sake of highlighting contradictions. Rather, the goal is to help liberal-democratic policymakers understand where the internet is currently, where it could be headed, and the implications of those directions," it adds.

MY NAME IS DMARC — The federal government's pretty far down the road toward meeting a final DHS deadline to fully implement a standard to guard against email spoofing, but there's still plenty to go, according to a study out today from Agari. As of July 15, months ahead of the Binding Operational Directive 18-01 deadline in mid-October, more than half of federal domains have moved to full enforcement of Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting & Conformance, or DMARC. Still, nearly one-fifth haven't even enabled DMARC as specified by a January deadline, the company found. Overall, Agari sees these developments as a good thing. "With less than three months until the final BOD 18-01 deadline, the U.S. Government has made tremendous strides forward in its DMARC adoption and compliance efforts," its study reads. "In comparison to the private sector, the U.S. Government should serve as a shining example for the implementation of common security standards."

NOTABLE CRITICISM — National Security Adviser John Bolton's decision to eliminate the position of White House cyber coordinator means that "there is no clear person" driving cyber policy "and there is no clear muscle memory," former Trump homeland security adviser Tom Bossert said in an interview published Wednesday. "The concern would be who's minding the store in the coordination and development and the proactive advocation of new and creative cyber policies and strategies," Bossert said on Yahoo News' Skullduggery podcast. Without a cyber coordinator, two senior directors are jointly running the NSC's cyber shop, overseeing a team of staffers who meet regularly with agency officials to plan the administration's strategy.

"I think Ambassador Bolton has to be very seriously thinking about augmenting the staff to make up for" the departure of cyber coordinator Rob Joyce, Bossert said, adding that "cyber troubles me" more than other government org-chart issues because so much of it is new.

After Bolton forced out Bossert, he downgraded the homeland security adviser to a deputy assistant to the president and eliminated the adviser's direct channel to Trump. "What I hope is that the portfolio that I had isn't neglected," Bossert said on the podcast. "If [the current homeland security] organizational structure doesn't work," he added, "it'll be a shame, because it'll be a failure to [Trump]. It wasn't his idea, and we owe him … professional advice." During his tenure, Bossert said, he briefed Trump "extensively" on both cybersecurity generally and Russia's election cyberattacks specifically.

Bossert also criticized Trump for dismissing Russian election meddling while standing next to Vladimir Putin, saying it "seemed to be appeasing Putin far too much." And he said he was disappointed to hear Trump repeat the discredited claim that the FBI needed to directly examine the Democratic National Committee's server to attribute the hacking. "We had a president who seemingly didn't understand what we told him directly" about the forensics work, Bossert said. Even so, he spoke wistfully of his last meeting with Trump after Bolton's arrival: "I think it's safe to say that I was a bit sad to leave, and he was a bit sad to see me go, and he's got my support in spirit."

A RARE LOOK AT NSA WATCHDOG WORK — A first-ever unclassified semiannual report to Congress from the NSA's inspector general released Wednesday offers a smorgasbord of details about the watchdog's work to evaluate agency cybersecurity. One audit found two deficiencies — no full system inventory and lack of implementing the most recent federal security guidance — that prevented the agency and the IG from knowing whether the NSA complied with the Federal Information Security Management Act. Another conclusion from the audit division's efforts between October and March was that the NSA had missing, required documents for authorizing every one of its computer systems currently authorized to operate that the IG examined.

One completed special study found that the NSA's public internet sites had several problems that jeopardized both classified data and the privacy of U.S. citizens. A special study listed as "ongoing" is examining NSA compliance with a Defense Department training program for protecting U.S. citizens' civil liberties. Among the significant outstanding recommendations stemming from IG inspections are a number related to rules and regulations for protecting computer networks, systems and data.

YET MORE ON THAT RUSSIA BLACKOUT THING — A top DHS official on Wednesday offered her perspective on a recent report that Russian hackers were prepared to trigger blackouts of the U.S. electricity grid. "To be clear, there was no threat for the electrical grid to go down," Jeanette Manfra, assistant secretary of cybersecurity and communications, said during a webinar. While the hackers "were in a position

to be able to manipulate some systems, this wasn't a broader threat to our entire electric grid."

Nonetheless, a bipartisan pair of senators — responding in part to the original Wall Street Journal report — sought a comprehensive threat assessment for U.S. utilities on Wednesday in a letter to Trump. "We are concerned about Russia's capabilities with respect to cyber attacks on our energy infrastructure," wrote Sens. Maria Cantwell, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy panel, and Lindsey Graham. "We believe the federal government needs to take stronger action prioritizing cybersecurity of energy networks and fighting cyber aggression to match your Department of Energy's outward facing commitment." The letter was first reported by NBC News.

RECENTLY ON PRO CYBERSECURITY — Trump will chair a meeting of the National Security Council this week about election security. … National security adviser John Bolton said the White House won't host Russian President Vladimir Putin in Washington until 2019. … Bolton's lack of high-level meetings in his first several months on the job is frustrating Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. ... The NSA and other clandestine services will be pressed behind closed doors Thursday by a House Intelligence Committee subpanel. … Nominees to lead two key U.S. intelligence agencies vowed to provide analysis free of political influence. … Sen. Ron Wyden told three administration officials that federal agencies should stop using Adobe Flash. … Pompeo assured lawmakers that the U.S. will keep pressuring Russia to avoid interfering in American elections.

Former Trump Official: No One 'Minding The Store' At White House On Cyberthreats

By Michael Isikoff

Yahoo! News, July 25, 2018

Amid mounting warnings about another Russian cyberattack on the 2018 midterm elections, President Trump's former homeland security adviser said a recent staff shakeup ordered by national security adviser John Bolton has left the White House with nobody in charge of U.S. cyber policy and raised concerns about "who is minding the store."

"On cyber, there is no clear person and or clear driver, and there is no clear muscle memory," said Tom Bossert, who served as White House homeland security adviser until last April, in an interview with the Yahoo News podcast Skullduggery.

"In some way playing jazz music, improvising policy because there is no clear playbook for it," Bossert said. "And so, yes, if you're asking me do I have any concerns? The concern would be who's minding the store in the coordination and development … of new and creative cyber policies and strategies."

Bossert's comments were his most unvarnished yet since new national security adviser John Bolton reorganized the White House national security staff and — with no explanation — gave the homeland security adviser his walking papers.

 no knowledgeable official directly in charge of organizing government-wide responses to malicious cyberattacks from foreign powers or other criminal hackers." data-reactid="28">Amid the overall National Security Council shakeup, Rob Joyce, a highly regarded former National Security Agency cybersleuth who served as Bossert's deputy for cyber policy, also resigned, leaving the White House with no knowledgeable official directly in charge of organizing government-wide responses to malicious cyberattacks from foreign powers or other criminal hackers.

 press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which the president seemed to question the U.S. government's own evidence pointing to Russia's cyberattacks during the U.S. election. This was especially an issue for Bossert since he had personally briefed the president on more than one occasion about the clear forensic evidence that Russia was behind the cyberattacks, leaving him puzzled that Trump would even raise the question about why the FBI never seized the Democratic National Committee computer server — something that Bossert said was of little forensic value." data-reactid="29">Bossert also said that he was "disappointed" in Trump's press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which the president seemed to question the U.S. government's own evidence pointing to Russia's cyberattacks during the U.S. election. This was especially an issue for Bossert since he had personally briefed the president on more than one occasion about the clear forensic evidence that Russia was behind the cyberattacks, leaving him puzzled that Trump would even raise the question about why the FBI never seized the Democratic National Committee computer server — something that Bossert said was of little forensic value.

"We talked extensively on cybersecurity," said Bossert about his briefings with Trump. "I thought we had a sufficient number of conversations on this particular matter."" data-reactid="30">"We talked extensively on cybersecurity," said Bossert about his briefings with Trump. "I thought we had a sufficient number of conversations on this particular matter."

"So look, I don't mean to pile on him. I've stated I was pretty disappointed — I think others have — in the president's press conference performance," Bossert added. "He needed to correct that; it seemed to be appeasing Putin far too much. In fact, it seemed oddly to suggest he believed Putin's galling assertions and dismissals."

Bossert came to the homeland security post with extensive experience in dealing with cyberattacks, having served on the NSC staff under President George W. Bush.

As he explained it, he was the official designated to personally inform the campaign of then candidate Barrack Obama that Chinese hackers had infiltrated its computers during the 2008 election. (At the same time, the Chinese had penetrated the computers of Republican candidate John McCain as well.)

 replaced him with a Coast Guard admiral, Doug Fears.)" data-reactid="33">But Bossert said that Bolton made it clear that he wanted a new "organizational structure" with a smaller NSC staff. (Bolton has since downgraded Bossert's position and replaced him with a Coast Guard admiral, Doug Fears.)

"What I hope is that the portfolio that I had isn't neglected." Bossert said. "So I think it's not for me to comment on their current organization structure. I'm going to watch it and see if there is any change in performance, but I'm rooting for them." He described his final talk with Trump as bittersweet. He and the president had a "very heartfelt and long conversation about it, and I think it's safe to say that I was a bit sad to leave and he was a bit sad to see me go and he's got my support in spirit," Bossert said. "If that organizational structure doesn't work, it'll be a shame because it'll be a failure to him. It wasn't his idea."

Download or subscribe on iTunes: "Skullduggery" by Yahoo News" data-reactid="35">Download or subscribe on iTunes: "Skullduggery" by Yahoo News

warning lights are blinking red" of another Russian cyberattack on the country's infrastructure." data-reactid="36">Bossert made his comments while attending the Aspen Security Forum — an annual gathering of national security professionals and journalists that was dominated this year by discussion about the potential for another Russian cyberattack on the midterm elections. Those concerns were ramped up when, on the eve of the conference, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said the "warning lights are blinking red" of another Russian cyberattack on the country's infrastructure.

 dubbed NotPetya, that crippled Ukraine's financial, energy and government sectors." data-reactid="39">In one panel at the conference, Bossert raised, as an example of the ongoing threat, a massive 2017 Russian cyberattack, dubbed NotPetya, that crippled Ukraine's financial, energy and government sectors.

The malware inserted by Russian state hackers in Ukrainian computers during that attack then spun out of control and ended up infecting critical systems in the United States and the United Kingdom.

 Western Europe and the United States," Bossert said during his Skullduggery interview. "And it also shut down three American ports for a period of a couple of days each. That was a tremendous, tremendous blow."" data-reactid="41">"They engaged in absolutely reckless behavior and that, you might recall, it ended up causing billions of dollars of loss in Western Europe and the United States," Bossert said during his Skullduggery interview. "And it also shut down three American ports for a period of a couple of days each. That was a tremendous, tremendous blow."

While still in the White House, Bossert led the U.S. government effort to publicly attribute the NotPetya attack to Russian military intelligence and to ratchet up sanctions. It was an exercise that, Bossert said, showed the importance of a vigorous U.S. role in combatting the growing plague of cyber-intrusions.

"We have to lead," he said. "The United States has to take action to turn that kind of improvising playbook into a written down set of rules based on action. We make some mistakes along the way, that's better than not acting."

Former Top Trump Aide Asks 'Who's Minding The Store' On Cyber-threats

MSNBC, July 26, 2018

It's been about two months since Donald Trump eliminated the job of the nation's cyber-security czar, as part of John Bolton's reorganization of the National Security Council. The New York Times reported at the time, "Cyber-security experts and members of Congress said they were mystified by the move…. It was the latest in a series of steps that appeared to run counter to the prevailing view in Washington of cybersecurity's importance."

Evidently, they weren't the only ones confused by the move. Yahoo News' Michael Isikoff reported yesterday:

Amid mounting warnings about another Russian cyberattack on the 2018 midterm elections, President Trump's former homeland security adviser said a recent staff shakeup ordered by national security adviser John Bolton has left the White House with nobody in charge of U.S. cyber policy and raised concerns about "who is minding the store."

"On cyber, there is no clear person and or clear driver, and there is no clear muscle memory," said Tom Bossert, who served as White House homeland security adviser until last April, in an interview with the Yahoo News podcast Skullduggery.

"In some way playing jazz music, improvising policy because there is no clear playbook for it," Bossert said. "And so, yes, if you're asking me do I have any concerns? The concern would be who's minding the store in the coordination and development … of new and creative cyber policies and strategies."

It's worth emphasizing that Bossert was not a peripheral figure in the president's orbit. During the presidential transition process, Trump announced that Bossert would serve in a newly created position: –assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism – giving him a prominent White House role.

And even this guy has "concerns" about the ways in which the Trump White House – where he worked for a year and a half – is addressing cyber-threats.

In fairness, not all of the news is discouraging. Politico reported yesterday that Trump "will chair a full meeting of the National Security Council on Friday to discuss election security." That almost certainly should've happened quite a while ago, but I'm glad it's happening.

But with the "warning lights blinking red," as Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats recently put it, it's difficult to credibly make the case that the Trump administration is doing everything it should. To that end, Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) wrote to the president yesterday, urging his administration "to take stronger action prioritizing cybersecurity."

As NBC News' report on this noted, the bipartisan letter asked the White House to detail what the executive branch is doing to combat Russia's cyber capabilities. We'll see what kind of response, if any, Cantwell and Graham receive.

The Cybersecurity 202: Agencies Struggling With Basic Cybersecurity Despite Trump's Pledge To Prioritize It

By Derek Hawkins

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

THE KEY

The federal government got hammered on multiple fronts Wednesday over its inability to protect its computer networks from cyberattacks.

A top lawmaker on Capitol Hill sounded the alarm about agencies' use of a web program widely known to be outdated and vulnerable. Across town, the Government Accountability Office revealed in a new report that agencies still hadn't implemented hundreds of recommendations to shore up their cyberdefenses. And even the watchdog at the National Security Agency, which is tasked with defending U.S. communication systems, rebuked the agency for failing to properly safeguard sensitive data stored in its networks.

The Trump administration has promised to make improving federal cybersecurity a priority, but the stories on Wednesday show that agencies across government still aren't taking even basic steps to defend themselves against digital threats. And it raises questions about whether President Trump is following through on his pledge to hold agency heads accountable for protecting their networks — a goal he set more than a year ago in his sweeping cybersecurity executive order.

"What's missing is White House leadership," Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) told me in an email. "There is no one in the executive branch with the vision, authority, and appetite to address of all of the low-hanging fruit for defensive cybersecurity."

"For far too long, the executive branch has failed to embrace basic cyber hygiene," added Wyden, who sent a letter Wednesday to the heads of the NSA and the Department of Homeland Security calling for the government to stop using Adobe Flash. The multimedia program is riddled with security flaws and will stop receiving security updates in 2020. "Most of this stuff isn't rocket science — it is basic cyber hygiene," Wyden said, "but someone needs to care enough to prioritize fixing it."

The White House recently parted ways with two of its top cybersecurity officials, who could have helped corral agencies into action. In their absence — and with plans to eliminate the role — it's not clear who could lead such an effort. That makes the critiques of the government's cybersecurity posture look even more troubling. Consider the following:

— Per Wyden's letter, top cybersecurity officials haven't offered guidelines for phasing out Adobe Flash, even though researchers have shown how hackers have used the software's vulnerabilities to launch cyberattacks.

— Agencies throughout government haven't heeded about 1,000 of 3,000 recommendations issued by the GAO on protecting cyber critical infrastructure, managing the cybersecurity workforce, and responding to cybersecurity incidents.

— NSA personnel aren't complying with rules for protecting "computer networks, systems and data," according to the agency's inspector general. The agency also has "inaccurate or incomplete" security plans and had fallen behind on basic federal information security guidelines, the inspector general found.

Trump vowed on the campaign trail to order a review of U.S. cyberdefenses and to confront malicious cyber activity by foreign governments. His cybersecurity executive order issued in May 2017 was no doubt a step in that direction, outlining plans for the president himself to hold agency heads accountable for managing cybersecurity risks.

But a year on, some experts are wondering when they will see results. "They made the claim that leadership was going to be held responsible. What does that mean? Do you give them more money? Do you fire people? What's the date for holding people accountable?" said Ari Schwartz, who served as the National Security Council's senior director for cybersecurity during the Obama administration.

"It's a case-by-case situation, but there has to be some follow-up," he told me. "And now is the time to become impatient about it."

Indeed, pressure is building on the White House to whip agencies into shape — and some of it is coming from within the administration. A May report by the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Homeland Security found that dozens of federal agencies weren't equipped to deal with cyber intrusions. Of 96 federal agencies examined, a

whopping 71 had cybersecurity programs deemed "at risk or high risk."

And not everyone is laying blame on the White House, including Rep. John Ratcliffe (R-Tex.), who is sponsoring legislation to codify into law a DHS program for identifying cybersecurity risks. In a hearing on the OMB report's findings Wednesday, he said he was concerned about the federal government's struggle to detect cyberthreats. But he told me afterward he feels the administration is taking the issue seriously.

"The Trump administration has been incredibly supportive of our efforts to address the glaring cybersecurity weaknesses in our federal government," Ratcliffe said in an email. "I'm confident we will see improvement in this space if we continue strict and vigilant oversight along the way."

PINGED, PATCHED, PWNED

PINGED: "Trump will convene a meeting Friday of the National Security Council on election security, a session that could include a discussion of possible Russian interference in November's midterm elections, according to a White House official," The Washington Post's Philip Rucker and Ashley Parker reported Wednesday. Trump has made conflicting comments and suggestions on the matter in recent days. In a tweet on Tuesday, he said without evidence that Russia "will be pushing very hard for the Democrats" in the 2018 midterm elections.

"But when he sits down Friday with his national security team — which includes Bolton, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and intelligence and military chiefs — Trump is expected to be confronted with the government's latest intelligence regarding election threats, including from Russia," Rucker and Parker wrote. "It was unclear what Friday's agenda entailed, but it would be striking to convene a meeting on election security without delving into the Russian threat — especially as the president is under scrutiny for his warm overtures to Putin."

PATCHED: Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday, Pompeo defended Trump's stance on Russia and said the president is "well-aware of the challenges that Russia poses to the United States and our partners and allies." In his opening remarks to the committee, Pompeo also said that he "personally made clear to the Russians there will be severe consequences for interference in our democratic processes."

As he concluded his opening statement, he sought to dispel concerns about Trump's position on Russian interference. "I want you to know, President Trump has stated that he accepts our intelligence community's conclusion that Russia meddled in the 2016 election." Pompeo said. "He has a complete and proper understanding of what happened. I know. I briefed him on it for over a year. This is perfectly clear to me, personally."

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), the committee's top Democrat, had a heated exchange with Pompeo about Trump's meeting with Putin in Helsinki, with both men interrupting each other several times at the beginning of the hearing. "In his conversation with Putin, I hope the president laid out the consequences of interference in the 2018 election, but I know you can't tell me that," Menendez said. Pompeo interjected, saying that Trump has stated publicly that he raised the issue with Putin and that "Vladimir understands that it won't be tolerated." "I wish he had said that in public in Helsinki," Menendez shot back. Pompeo also responded in the affirmative when Menendez asked him if he would work with senators on new legislation to punish Russia.

PWNED: "Amid mounting warnings about another Russian cyberattack on the 2018 midterm elections, [Trump]'s former homeland security adviser said a recent staff shake-up ordered by national security adviser John Bolton has left the White House with nobody in charge of U.S. cyber policy and raised concerns about 'who is minding the store,' " Yahoo News's Michael Isikoff wrote Wednesday. " 'On cyber, there is no clear person and/or clear driver, and there is no clear muscle memory,' said Tom Bossert, who served as White House homeland security adviser until last April, in an interview with the Yahoo News podcast Skullduggery."

Additionally, Bossert, who had briefed the president on Russian interference, lamented Trump's news conference in Helsinki, Isikoff reported. " 'We talked extensively on cybersecurity,' said Bossert about his briefings with Trump. 'I thought we had a sufficient number of conversations on this particular matter,' " Isikoff wrote. "'So look, I don't mean to pile on him. I've stated I was pretty disappointed — I think others have — in the president's press conference performance,' Bossert added. 'He needed to correct that; it seemed to be appeasing Putin far too much. In fact, it seemed oddly to suggest he believed Putin's galling assertions and dismissals.'"

PUBLIC KEY

— Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) worry about Russian cyberthreats to the U.S. power grid and are seeking answers from the White House. In a letter to Trump on Wednesday, the senators wrote that "more information must be provided to Congress addressing our specific concerns about Russian capabilities or interference with respect to our energy infrastructure." Cantwell and Graham asked Trump about Russia's abilities to threaten the U.S. energy infrastructure, the extent of previous Russian attempts to infiltrate it and the Trump administration's response to those threats. "Your administration has proposed the formation of a new Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response at the Department of Energy as a way to elevate the importance of cyber security issues," Cantwell and Graham wrote to

Trump. "However, there is a need for additional cybersecurity resources to address our fundamental concerns."

— "The major problem law enforcement faces in obtaining digital evidence is not the encryption of devices but figuring out which company holds the relevant data and how to get it, according to a study released Wednesday by the Center for Strategic and International Studies," The Post's Ellen Nakashima reported. "Though much of the debate around access to digital evidence has focused on the challenges law enforcement agencies face in cracking encrypted devices or decoding encrypted data, CSIS researchers William A. Carter and Jennifer Daskal have found that the biggest hurdle is actually identifying the phone or email service provider that holds the data."

— More cybersecurity news from the public sector:

Russian hackers who penetrated hundreds of U.S. utilities, manufacturing plants and other facilities last year gained access by using the most conventional of phishing tools, tricking staffers into entering passwords, officials said Wednesday.

The Associated Press

The Government Accountability Office warns that the 2020 Census, which will employ new technologies such as cloud and mobile computing, faces a greater risk of cyberattack than earlier, lower-tech efforts.

The Wall Street Journal

PRIVATE KEY

SECURITY FAILS

— "Cosco Shipping Holdings Co. was hit by a cyberattack that has disabled the Chinese state-run company's U.S. website and email systems, but the company said the incident hasn't disrupted its global shipping operations," The Wall Street Journal's Costas Paris reported. "'So far, all vessels of our company are operating normally, and our main business operations are stable,' Cosco said in a customer advisory posted Wednesday on its Facebook page. The company was communicating with customers via social media."

GAO Asks Whether Trump Admin. Erred By Axing Cybersecurity Coordinator

By Jory Heckman

Federal News Radio (DC), July 26, 2018

As agencies face an increasing volume of cyber threats, the Government Accountability Office will examine whether the Trump administration has a reliable hierarchy of cybersecurity leadership.

Last year, federal civilian agencies reported more than 35,000 information security incidents to U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), a more than 14 percent increase from the previous year, according to a GAO report released Wednesday.

Since 2010, the governmentwide watchdog has issued more than 3,000 recommendations to help agencies shore up their cybersecurity posture, but as of this month, about 1,000 recommendations have yet to be implemented

"I don't think the federal government is moving at a pace commensurate with the evolving threat in this area," Comptroller General Gene Dodaro told members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Wednesday.

Dodaro added that he would "like to see more milestones" the development of an updated National Cybersecurity Strategy, but said the Homeland Security Department plans to release its own strategy in August.

The DHS plan, he added, would identify further milestones that would include the resources and the performance measures. Congress thrown by cyber coordinator's dismissal

In reaction to the rise in cyber threats outlined in the GAO report, several lawmakers expressed concern over the elimination of the White House cybersecurity coordinator role, a job last held by Rob Joyce until he stepped down in April.

"I was surprised that the position was eliminated," Dodaro said, adding that GAO plans to take a look at the Trump administration's current cyber chain of command to determine whether splitting up the functions of the cybersecurity coordinator makes sense.

"We've never really evaluated the cybersecurity coordinator role. We've been more focused on getting a national strategy in place and making clarifications," Dodaro said. "I haven't fully examined what that position did — what kind of resources they had available and what their accomplishments were during that period of time. It's an area that I'm concerned about. You always want to have good leadership. You can have good leadership in a number of different ways. But I want to look at it more carefully before I advise on what exactly what would need to be done differently from what they're contemplating doing."

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), the ranking member of the IT subcommittee, encouraged GAO to look at the impact of the cybersecurity coordinator role.

"Maybe diffusing, or splitting responsibility, allows us to have a whole greater than the sum of the parts," Connolly said.

But Connolly also acknowledged recent reports that have shown the cybersecurity coordinator role had been key to resolving conflicts among agencies, helping cabinet-level agency heads prepare major policy decisions and responding to cyber crises.

"More often than not in government, you need a central focus — some champion who is vested with authority and responsibility for moving the agenda for advocating for a cause," he added. "I would welcome you to look at that. I think we'd want to know, did the Trump administration make a

good decision or did it make a mistake in abolishing this position?"

Federal Chief Information Officer Suzette Kent said newly confirmed Federal Chief Information Security Officer Grant Schneider works closely with her and Rear Adm. Douglas Fears, the administration's new homeland security adviser.

"My federal chief information security officer has a dual-reporting relationship between he and I, so that there's no miss or time in translation for things that we need to take action on," Kent said. "I think I have a very clear set of mandates of actions that we need to take across the federal agencies."

But the gaps in cyber talent, real or perceived, don't end at leadership. Kent said more than 15,000 cyber positions across the government still need to be filled.

"In many cases, we still have almost a 25 percent gap in the number of cyber resources that we need across federal agencies and what we currently have in place," she said. "Particularly, we have some gaps in leadership and places where we have open positions that are key leaders. In many cases, the individuals, when we get them in, their tenure is less than 12-18 months." Modernizing workforce on PMA priorities list

The President's Management Agenda, which Kent has advocated for in recent months, lists modernizing the workforce as one of 14 major cross-agency priorities.

"Our current status is as much a people issue as it is a technology issue," she said.

In order to address the gaps in the cyber workforce, National Institute of Standards and Technology in August 2017 released its Cybersecurity Workforce Framework as an attempt to have a common language and designation for cybersecurity and IT job descriptions.

Meanwhile, the Federal Cyber Workforce Assessment Act, which passed in 2016, has tasked agencies with assigning a code to specific job functions.

But in a report last month, GAO found that 13 of 24 agencies still hadn't met all of the requirements of the law.

Of the 35,000 security incidents mentioned in the report, GAO found that agencies weren't able to identify a root cause in 31 percent of cases.

"It's important to have an effort to detect these things when they occur," Dodaro said. "The attacks happen in a matter of minutes, but the detection doesn't occur for months later, and that impairs the ability to determine exactly [what] happened that led to this attack situation."

Russian Hackers' New Target: A Vulnerable Democratic Senator

By Andrew Desideriokevin Poulsen
Daily Beast, July 26, 2018

The Russian intelligence agency behind the 2016 election cyberattacks targeted Sen. Claire McCaskill as she began her 2018 re-election campaign in earnest, a Daily Beast forensic analysis reveals. That makes the Missouri Democrat the first identified target of the Kremlin's 2018 election interference.

McCaskill, who has been highly critical of Russia over the years, is widely considered to be among the most vulnerable Senate Democrats facing re-election this year as Republicans hope to hold their slim majority in the Senate. In 2016, President Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton by almost 20 points in the senator's home state of Missouri.

There's no evidence to suggest that this attempt to lure McCaskill staffers was successful. The precise purpose of the approach was also unclear. Asked about the hack attempt by Russia's GRU intelligence agency, McCaskill told The Daily Beast on Thursday that she wasn't yet prepared to discuss it.

"I'm not going to speak of it right now," she said. "I think we'll have something on it next week. I'm not going to speak about it right now. I can't confirm or do anything about it right now."

The senator later released a statement asserting that the cyberattack was unsuccessful.

"Russia continues to engage in cyber warfare against our democracy. I will continue to speak out and press to hold them accountable," McCaskill said. "While this attack was not successful, it is outrageous that they think they can get away with this. I will not be intimidated. I've said it before and I will say it again, Putin is a thug and a bully."

In August 2017, around the time of the hack attempt, Trump traveled to Missouri and chided McCaskill, telling the crowd to "vote her out of office." Just this last week, however, Trump said, on Twitter, that he feared Russians would intervene in the 2018 midterm elections on behalf of Democrats.

"In August 2017, around the time of the hack attempt, Trump traveled to Missouri and chided McCaskill, telling the crowd to 'vote her out of office.'"

The revelations of the attempted hack of McCaskill staffers comes just weeks after Special Counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers, accusing them of orchestrating cyberattacks that targeted the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Clinton's campaign in 2016.

On Friday, Trump is scheduled to chair a meeting of the National Security Council on election vulnerabilities facing the midterm elections—amid persistent criticism, particularly after his Helsinki meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, that he isn't taking Russian interference seriously.

The attempt against McCaskill's office was a variant of the password-stealing technique used by Russia's so-called

"Fancy Bear" hackers against Clinton's campaign chairman, John Podesta, in 2016.

The hackers sent forged notification emails to Senate targets claiming the target's Microsoft Exchange password had expired, and instructing them to change it. If the target clicked on the link, he or she was taken to a convincing replica of the U.S. Senate's Active Directory Federation Services (ADFS) login page, a single sign-on point for e-mail and other services.

As with the Podesta phishing, each Senate phishing email had a different link coded with the recipient's email address. That allowed the fake password-change webpage to display the user's email address when they arrived, making the site more convincing.

In October, Microsoft wrested control of one of the spoofed website addresses—adfs.senate.qov.info. Seizing the Russians' malicious domain names has been easy for Microsoft since August 2017, when a federal judge in Virginia issued a permanent injunction against the GRU hackers, after Microsoft successfully sued them as unnamed "John Doe" defendants. The court established a process that lets Microsoft take over any web addresses the hackers use that includes a Microsoft trademark.

Microsoft redirected the traffic from the fake Senate site to its own sinkhole server, putting it in a prime position to view targets trying to click through to change their passwords.

The Daily Beast identified McCaskill as a target while investigating statements made by Microsoft VP Tom Burt last week in an appearance at the Aspen Security Forum. Burton discussed the Virginia injunction, and told the audience that it allowed Microsoft to thwart a phishing campaign against three midterm election candidates, who he declined to name.

"We did discover that a fake Microsoft domain had been established as the landing page for phishing attacks, and we saw metadata that suggested those phishing attacks were being directed at three candidates who are all standing for elections in the midterm elections," said Burt, Microsoft's corporate vice president for customer security and trust. "We took down that domain and working with the government actually were able to avoid anybody being infected by that particular attack."

The most recent domain seizures recorded in the Virginia case took place between August and December of last year, when Microsoft grabbed seven malicious web addresses, including the "qov.info" address. A report from the security company Trend Micro released in January listed that address and the role it played in a Senate phishing campaign against unnamed targets.

A snapshot of a deep link on the phishing site taken September 26th by a website security scanner showed the fake password-change page with the Senate email address of a McCaskill policy aide on display.

"McCaskill has spoken out forcefully against Moscow, likening Russian election-meddling to 'a form of warfare' and calling Putin a 'thug and a bully.'"

There is a notable divide between Congress and the Trump administration over the vulnerability of the 2018 election to Russian election interference.

In March, the Senate Intelligence Committee warned state election officials to make cybersecurity a "high priority" for their election systems, particularly over voter databases, and urged the states to bolster their coordination with the Department of Homeland Security. But the secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen, appeared earlier this month to downplay the threat. While "adversaries and nonstate actors" consider U.S. elections a persistent target, Nielsen said there are "no indications that Russia is targeting the 2018 U.S. midterms at a scale or scope to match their activities in 2016."

By contrast, Dan Coats, the embattled director of national intelligence, testified in February that Russia considered its 2016 election hacking a success. Putin "views the 2018 U.S. midterm elections as a potential target for Russian influence operations," Coats told the Senate intelligence panel. Last week, after being rebuked by Trump beside Putin in Helsinki, Coats reiterated his concern about Russia's "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

Earlier this year, Congress appropriated $380 million, as part of a broader spending package, to individual states for election security. The Senate is currently weighing whether to authorize an additional $250 million in similar grants.

A spokesperson for the Senate Intelligence Committee declined to comment, as did a spokesperson for Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the panel.

McCaskill is one of 10 Senate Democrats facing re-election this year in states that Trump won in 2016. Her likely Republican challenger is Josh Hawley, who currently serves as the state's attorney general. Outside groups and campaign committees have spent more than $15.5 million against McCaskill so far.

McCaskill has spoken out forcefully against Moscow, likening Russian election-meddling to "a form of warfare" and calling Putin a "thug and a bully." She was also caught up in the Podesta hack, which was revealed when WikiLeaks released the Clinton campaign chair's private email communications. The document dump showed that McCaskill called Podesta to inform him that she had "info" about an individual working in the State Department's inspector general's office, which at the time was investigating Clinton's private email server. The "info" was that a top aide at the inspector general's office once worked for a Republican senator, Chuck Grassley of Iowa.

McCaskill's criticisms of WikiLeaks stretch back nearly a decade. In 2010, she and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)

called for prosecutions of individuals who send classified information to WikiLeaks. Earlier this month, Mueller's GRU indictment included Russian intelligence officers who, through the Guccifer2.0 persona, are accused of funnelling the hacked 2016 data to WikiLeaks.

"I hope we can find out where this is coming from and go after them with the force of law," she said at the time.

—with additional reporting by Spencer Ackerman

Key Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill Targeted In Password-stealing Scheme By Russian Hackers: Report

By Gregg Re

Fox News, July 26, 2018

Russian hackers targeted staff employed by Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., using a sophisticated password-stealing scheme late last year, according to a new report.

The apparently unsuccessful hack, which occurred around August 2017 and was unearthed by The Daily Beast, is the latest indication that Russian President Vladimir Putin remains committed to meddling in U.S. elections, despite Trump administration warnings against future interference.

At a Senate hearing on Wednesday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo threatened "severe consequences" if Russian hackers attempt to influence the midterms in November. And earlier this month, the Department of Justice's Cyber-Digital Task Force announced new plans to combat cyberwarfare (including election meddling), and to notify the public about suspected interference.

McCaskill, a Democrat in a state handily carried by President Trump in 2016, is a prime target for Republicans in the midterm elections as they look to increase their narrow 51-49 majority in the Senate.

"Russia continues to engage in cyberwarfare against our democracy. I will continue to speak out and press to hold them accountable," McCaskill said in a statement. "While this attack was not successful, it is outrageous that they think they can get away with this. I will not be intimidated. I've said it before and I will say it again: Putin is a thug and a bully."

She was hit with a politically damaging report Tuesday when her local newspaper revealed businesses that tied to her husband have gotten more than $131 million in federal subsidies since she took office. The report dropped as President Trump was preparing to stump and fundraise for her likely Republican challenger in the midterms, State Attorney General Josh Hawley.

The Daily Beast traced the attempted hack of McCaskill's staff after comments made by a Microsoft vice president at the Aspen Security Forum earlier this month. Microsoft went to court last year to secure an injunction that allowed the company to seize domain names used by Russian hackers that spoofed, or imitated, Microsoft trademarks as a means of tricking targets into entering their passwords.

"Putin is a thug and a bully."

– Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.

"We did discover that a fake Microsoft domain had been established as the landing page for phishing attacks, and we saw metadata that suggested those phishing attacks were being directed at three candidates who are all standing for elections in the midterm elections," Burt told attendees at the forum. "We took down that domain and working with the government actually were able to avoid anybody being infected by that particular attack."

The hackers established personalized URLs for some of their victims, and in reviewing those URLs, The Daily Beast found that McCaskill's staff was among the targets. It remains unclear whom the other targets mentioned by Burt are, or whether Russia has successfully targeted them.

Trump, meanwhile, has suggested – apparently without evidence – that Russian hackers would be working to help his political opponents in the coming elections. The FBI, CIA, and NSA have concluded, to varying degrees of confidence, that Russia meddled in the 2016 elections and wanted to help Trump win.

"I'm very concerned that Russia will be fighting very hard to have an impact on the upcoming Election," he wrote on Twitter this week. "Based on the fact that no President has been tougher on Russia than me, they will be pushing very hard for the Democrats. They definitely don't want Trump!"

The tweet came amid continuing bipartisan outcry over Trump's meeting with Putin in Helsinki, Finland, earlier this month. In Helsinki, Trump suggested that, contrary to his own intelligence community's assessments, he didn't see why it "would be" Russia that attempted to meddle in the 2016 elections.

Trump later claimed he had misspoken, and meant to say that he didn't see why it "wouldn't' be" Russia that attempted to interfere in the elections – although Trump left the door open to the possibility that other nations or actors had also attempted to meddle.

Fox News' Andrew O'Reilly contributed to this report.

Gregg Re is an editor for Fox News. Follow him on Twitter @gregg_re.

Democratic Sen. McCaskill Confirms Russian Hacking Attempt

By Mary Clare Jalonick

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri says Russian hackers tried unsuccessfully to infiltrate her Senate computer network, raising questions about the extent to which Russia will try to interfere in the 2018 elections.

McCaskill, who is up for re-election this year, confirmed the attempted hack after The Daily Beast website reported that Russia's GRU intelligence agency tried to break into the senator's computers in August 2017. The Daily Beast report Thursday was based on the site's forensic analysis after a Microsoft executive said last week that the company had helped stop email phishing attacks on three unidentified candidates.

In a statement, McCaskill said she wants to hold the hackers and Russian President Vladimir Putin accountable.

"While this attack was not successful, it is outrageous that they think they can get away with this," she said. "I will not be intimidated. I've said it before and I will say it again, Putin is a thug and a bully."

Her office would not give any details about the attempted attack or say how they learned about it. A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he did not have immediate comment. An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment Thursday night.

McCaskill, a Democrat in a state that overwhelmingly voted for President Donald Trump, is considered one of the most vulnerable senators up for re-election this year. According to The Daily Beast, the email phishing scam that targeted her office was similar to a successful Russian hacking of Democrat Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, John Podesta, in 2016.

The report comes two days after Trump suggested that the Russians may try to help Democrats in this election cycle. He has repeatedly questioned the extent to which Russia interfered in the 2016 elections despite an assessment from the country's intelligence agencies that they did. The intelligence agencies said Russia was attempting to help Trump win the election.

Trump tweeted Tuesday, without evidence: "I'm very concerned that Russia will be fighting very hard to have an impact on the upcoming Election. Based on the fact that no President has been tougher on Russia than me, they will be pushing very hard for the Democrats. They definitely don't want Trump!"

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, said the news confirms what he and others have warned for some time.

"The Russians saw 2016 as a success, and they'll be back in 2018, unless we do far more to protect ourselves than we're currently doing," Warner said, "Unfortunately, the lack of leadership from the White House means that we still have no all-of-government approach to addressing this threat."

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

'Putin Is A Thug,' McCaskill Says After Reported Russian Hacking Attempt Against Her

By Bryan Lowry

McClatchy, July 26, 2018

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill called Russian President Vladimir Putin a thug after it was reported that Russian hackers targeted the Missouri Democrat's office last year.

McCaskill said in a statement that the attack, which was first reported Thursday by The Daily Beast, was unsuccessful.

"Russia continues to engage in cyber warfare against our democracy. I will continue to speak out and press to hold them accountable," she said. "While this attack was not successful, it is outrageous that they think they can get away with this. I will not be intimidated. I've said it before and I will say it again, Putin is a thug and a bully."

The Daily Beast reported that the hacking attempt against McCaskill occurred around the same time President Donald Trump made his first trip to Missouri as president and urged a crowd in Springfield to vote McCaskill out if she did not back the president's tax plan.

McCaskill has widely been seen as one of the most vulnerable Democrats in the 2018 election cycle as she pursues re-election in a state Trump won by double digits.

Trump has aggressively supported Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley in his campaign to unseat the incumbent Democrat.

The Daily Beast reported that the hackers sent emails to Senate targets informing them their emails had expired, a phishing scheme similar to the one used against Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign chair, John Podesta, during the 2016 election.

A day before the hacking attempt against McCaskill became public, her fellow Missouri Democrat, U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, expressed concern that Russia would seek to interfere in the mid-term elections, which will decide control of the U.S. House and Senate.

"The Russians have not retreated at all since 2016. We will very likely find their fingerprints all over the 2018 elections," Cleaver said.

Cleaver criticized Trump and congressional Republicans for not doing more to protect against the threat of Russian influence on elections.

"It's almost like this is part of our political process now. … We're not doing anything, not anything, that would make our elections safer," he said. "And we haven't come up with any way to punish the perpetrators from the last time."

McCaskill's colleague, U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt, a Missouri Republican, chairs the Senate Rules Committee, which has held multiple hearings on the issue of election security, and

serves on the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Russia's role in the 2016 election.

Trump has repeatedly disputed the notion that Russian cyber attacks against the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee were intended to boost his campaign over the former secretary of state's.

During an interview Wednesday with The Star, Blunt said he agreed with the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community that during the 2016 election Russia "wanted to do things that would weaken our democracy, they wanted to do things that would hurt the person that they thought was going to be elected president, Hillary Clinton, and that in the process of doing that they wound up with a clear preference for things that would help (Trump). But I think it was in that order."

Blunt was careful to distinguish between Russia's cyber campaign to influence elections by leaking damaging material or spreading disinformation and the threats to the security of states' election systems.

"I think that's a totally different question of how social media of all kinds now impacts elections. … That's different than the structure of the election itself, which is the ultimate thing that voters have to believe in. The thread that binds democracy together is voters believing that what happened on Election Day was what actually happened," Blunt said.

Blunt said he is confident that federal and local election officials are much more aware of the potential threats against election systems going into the 2018 election. Missouri and Kansas hold their primary elections Aug. 7.

McCaskill Says Senate Office Was Target Of Phishing Scam

Failed attempt to steal passwords, attributed to Russia, comes as concern grows about replay of 2016 election interference

By Natalie Andrews

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Claire McCaskill, A Vulnerable Democrat Running For Reelection, Targeted In Hacking Attempt By Russian Spies

By Ellen Nakashima

Washington Post, July 27, 2018

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri, one of the most vulnerable Democrats running for reelection this year, was targeted by Russian government hackers who sought but failed to compromise her Senate computer network.

"Russia continues to engage in cyber warfare against our democracy," McCaskill said in a press release Thursday evening. "While this attack was not successful, it is outrageous that they think they can get away with this. I will not be intimidated. I've said it before and I will say it again, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is a thug and a bully."

The hackers, who belong to Russia's military spy agency GRU, targeted two other candidates running in the midterms, according to a Microsoft executive, Tom Burt, who spoke at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado last week. He did not identify the candidates. None were compromised, he said.

McCaskill issued the statement after the Daily Beast reported on the attempt. McCaskill, who is the ranking Democrat on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and also sits on the Armed Services Committee, has been critical of President Trump's statements that appear to discount the intelligence community's assessment that Russia used information warfare in an attempt to influence the 2016 election.

Just two weeks ago, the Justice Department announced the indictments of 12 GRU officers charged with hacking Democratic Party email networks and releasing stolen material in an effort to affect the election.

Top U.S. intelligence officials, including Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats, have warned that they expected the Russians to try again this year.

"Russia has been the most aggressive foreign actor — no question," Coats said in recent remarks at the Hudson Institute. "And they continue their efforts to undermine our democracy."

At Aspen, Burt said the three candidates were targeted using spear-phishing, a common hacker technique to get targets to open emails that appear legitimate but in fact lure victims to click on malware-infested links or send them to websites that contain malware — in an effort to obtain users' log-in credentials and passwords. He said Microsoft discovered "a fake Microsoft domain" or website that the hackers had created to which spear-phish victims were directed.

"We took down that domain, and working with the government, actually were able to avoid anybody being infected by that particular attack," he said.

McCaskill is expected to face Josh Hawley, Missouri's attorney general and the leading GOP contender for the Senate seat, in November.

Russian Agent Visited Election Websites In 2 Georgia Counties In 2016

By Mark Niesse

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, July 26, 2018

A Russian agent accused of tampering with the 2016 presidential election visited election websites in Cobb and Fulton counties, according to the Georgia Secretary of State's Office.

The Russian, one of 12 military intelligence officials indicted this month as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, viewed a job posting for a Cobb election technician position and visited a Fulton website containing information for candidates.

The agent, Anatoliy Sergeyevich Kovalev, didn't gain access to state or county election systems, said Candice Broce, a spokeswoman for Secretary of State Brian Kemp.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Channel 2 Action News exclusively learned about the Russian connection to Georgia on Thursday, the same day Kemp's office sent a bulletin to election officials across the state warning them about activity by a suspected Russian operative.

The news arrives amid widespread concern about election security in Georgia after the state exposed more than 6 million voters' private information in 2015. Election security advocates are pushing to replace Georgia's electronic touchscreens with a system that includes a verifiable paper ballot.

Georgia officials first found out that Russians viewed county election websites when the federal indictment was announced July 13, Broce said. Since then, the Secretary of State's Office has been working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to find out more.

Kemp, who won the Republican nomination for governor Tuesday, has maintained for years that Georgia wasn't targeted or breached by the Russians during the 2016 general election.

"We welcome new information, and this is new information," Broce said. "It is clear that there were Russian operatives who were looking at other states, and that in Georgia, there was a Russian operative looking at county websites. Still, DHS' assessment has not changed. The Secretary of State's Office has not been targeted or hacked."

The indictment said Kovalev "visited the websites of certain counties in Georgia, Iowa and Florida to identify vulnerabilities."

While it's unclear what actions Kovalev took, it's possible he was looking for election officials' email addresses, according to the bulletin from the state to county election officials.

Then those email addresses could have been targeted by spear phishing campaigns, in which an attacker could gain access to computer systems through a malicious link. That's what the indictment alleges happened when Russians broke into the email accounts of the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton campaign officials, then distributed politically damaging emails through Wikileaks, which published the stolen emails.

The Cobb elections job website that Kovalev viewed didn't contain any confidential information, Cobb Elections Director Janine Eveler said. Kovalev didn't apply for the election technician job, and it was later filled internally.

"Everyone in the public can look at the same thing, so I don't know what they could have gotten," Eveler told Channel 2. "I'm not sure how anybody either in the public or internationally could have gotten anything that would have damaged elections. … We didn't hire any Russians, please rest assured."

In Fulton, the website visited by Kovalev contained general information for candidates, the election calendar, how to qualify to run for office, restrictions on campaign activities and conduct at polling places.

"Anybody can visit our website. It would concern me if there was evidence of something nefarious done, but all indications from DHS are it was just a visit," Fulton Elections Director Richard Barron said.

The Secretary of State's Office recently invited Department of Homeland Security officials to provide cybersecurity training to elections officials across the state, Broce said. Federal officials have already provided security assessments in 17 county election offices and warehouses.

Georgia was one of two states nationwide that didn't accept the federal government's offer to scan state election networks ahead of the presidential election to look for vulnerabilities. The state had already contracted with private cybersecurity companies to provide similar services, Broce said.

Following the revelation that a Russian agent visited Georgia election websites, officials will have to be more vigilant than ever to protect the integrity of elections, she said.

"It is a serious concern, and it's something that we've been on top of," Broce said. "We're working with county officials every day, reminding them, don't open a suspicious email. It seems basic, but that's where you have vulnerabilities."

Illinois Congressional Delegation Requests Election Security Briefing Because State Was A 'Major Target' In 2016

Chicago Tribune, July 25, 2018

Illinois' entire U.S. House delegation is asking federal officials for a briefing about election security, given that the state was a "major target" of Russian hackers in the 2016 election.

The briefing request comes via a letter led by Democratic U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider of Deerfield to Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. And it comes less than two weeks after a hack of the Illinois State Board of Elections likely was referenced in special counsel Robert Mueller's indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers.

That breach compromised the names, addresses, dates of birth and partial Social Security numbers of about 76,000 voters. In their letter, Illinois' 18 Democratic and Republican

federal lawmakers note that state election officials have worked to address the hack in hopes of preventing another one.

Still, they "remain deeply concerned about Russia and other foreign state actors meddling in our elections. The federal government must continue to provide our Illinois election officials with the necessary support to protect its networks," the letter reads.

"The Mueller indictment raises additional questions about the extent of Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and our preparedness for when they try again," Schneider said in a statement. "I'm encouraged that the entire Illinois House delegation is united in seeking answers to protect the integrity of our elections."

The letter is a rare showing of bipartisanship during an election year from Illinois' D.C. delegation, some of whom face tough re-election opponents in the fall.

Though the Mueller probe continues to make national waves, Illinois voters have known about the cyberattack here for nearly two years. It was discovered in July 2016, and the FBI issued an alert the following month. The timeline listed in the indictment matches up with what the state publicly acknowledged about a data breach in 2016.

The Russian officers, operating a military intelligence agency called the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, or GRU, also used a computer located in Illinois to help steal Democratic National Committee documents, the indictment says.

In order to steal a large number of documents without detection, the indictment says, the Russians used a publicly available technology tool to gather and compress files, including opposition research, from DNC networks.

They then used other malware, known as X-Tunnel, to move the DNC documents to a GRU-leased computer in Illinois, according to the indictment.

The Russians moved digital information from the DNC networks to the computer in Illinois in April 2016, federal officials say. On April 22, 2016, the Russians moved compressed DNC data using X-Tunnel to the computer, according to the indictment. Six days later, they again connected to the computer in Illinois and used X-Tunnel to steal additional documents.

Last week, Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed legislation that would have withdrawn Illinois from a controversial multistate voter registration system, dismissing Democrats' concerns that it's vulnerable to hacking as "politically motivated."

Illinois voters who suspect they are the victim of identity theft may contact the state attorney general's Identity Theft Hotline at 1-866-999-5630.

Reed, Leahy Amendment Would Provide $250M For State Election Security Grants

By Rob Borkowski

Warwick (RI) Post, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), a senior member of the Appropriations Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) have introduced an amendment providing $250 million for State Election Security Grants for updating voting equipment to secure election systems.

Earlier this week, Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Kilmartin joined several state attorneys general in asking Congress to take steps to secure the nation's election system from Russian influence.

After the U.S. intelligence community's unanimous assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, Congress came together and appropriated $380 million dollars for State Election Security Grants in the fiscal year 2018 Omnibus, Reed's office reported. As a result, Rhode Island received $3 million to help the state secure election equipment, defend voting systems from cyber attacks, and improve election security.

According to a 2018 report by the Center for American Progress, which evaluated the security preparedness of all 50 state election systems, most state election systems remain vulnerable to hacking and foreign interference. Rhode Island scored above the national average, getting a B rating in the report. Not a single state received an "A" rating. In addition to Rhode Island, ten other states received a B, 23 states got a C, 12 states received a D, and five states were given an F.

Speaking on the floor of the U.S. Senate, Reed highlighted the national security need for Congress to pass his amendment with Senator Leahy to provide an additional $250 million in State Election Security Grants:

"It is difficult to overstate the need to shore up support for democratic institutions here and around the world in light of President Trump's recent foreign policy failures.

In the last week or so, the President has attempted to derail the NATO summit by insulting our allies and demanding that they immediately double their contributions, thrown a wrench into Brexit negotiations, and seemingly endorsed a new Prime Minister for the United Kingdom and then embraced Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

President Trump stood shoulder to shoulder with President Putin while the world looked on and he chose to take the word of an autocrat and KGB agent over the assessments of the American intelligence community on Russia's interference in our elections.

By indulging President Putin's fabrications, he also gave credence to Putin's propaganda on Crimea and Syria, Russia's use of chemical agents against civilians, and its violation of arms control obligations.

This failure to stand up for America's interests and those of our allies and partners was a dereliction of the president's responsibilities that will continue to undermine our national security.

President Trump's erratic and divisive actions are undermining that which makes us strong. Our nation and our allies, our partners around the world benefit from the world order that the United States created after World War II.

We draw strength from our allies and from participation in international institutions. We are not weakened by them. We are strengthened by them.

While the President later took low-energy steps to walk back and obfuscate his words on Russian interference, he soon took to Twitter again to aggressively attempt to discredit investigations into Russian election interference and into his own campaign.

Regardless of what President Trump may say or tweet, we must be absolutely clear — the threat of Russian interference in our democracy is not a hoax or a witch hunt, and Congress and the states must act now to address the real threat of another foreign intrusion into our elections.

Indeed, the findings of the intelligence community assessment were clear, and I quote, "[w]e assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency."

This problem is not behind us. Indeed, President Trump should listen to the national security officials that he appointed and a Republican-controlled Senate confirmed. The Director of National Intelligence, former Republican Senator Dan Coates issued multiple public warnings this month that "the warning signs are there" and "blinking red again" when it comes to Russian cyberattacks on the United States midterm elections. Last week, FBI Director Christopher Wray stated "Russia attempted to interfere with the last election and . . . continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day." When asked last week if Russia is still targeting the United States. DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said that the US 'would be foolish to think [the Russians] are not. They have the capability. They have the will. We've got to be prepared.'

The private sector also validates these concerns. At last week's Aspen Security Forum panel, Tom Burt – Microsoft's Vice President of Customer Security and Trust – told an audience that Microsoft already has detected cyberattacks against three candidates running for Congress this fall. These attacks looked very much like those phishing attacks that Russian agents used against Democrats in 2016.

So this chamber faces a stark choice:

We can listen to the American intelligence community, nonpartisan experts; we can acknowledge the indictments and guilty pleas of 33 people by the special counsel and the ongoing warnings of Republican-appointed national security officials, all of whom agree that our democracy is under attack; or we can trust the words of Vladimir Putin, online trolls, and conspiracy theorists, and President Trump, who insists in the face of evidence that Russia is not attacking our democracy.

For my part, I don't believe that's a very difficult choice.

Mr. President, securing our elections should not be a partisan issue. Election security is national security. The states need our help to defend our elections against these attacks."

In addition to Leahy and Reed, the amendment is backed by U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Christopher Coons (D-DE), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Mark Warner (D-VA), Tom Carper (D-DE), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

About Rob Borkowski

Rob has worked as reporter and editor for several publications, including The Kent County Daily Times and Coventry Courier, before working for Gatehouse in MA then moving home with Patch Media. Now he's publisher and editor of WarwickPost.com. Contact him at editor@warwickpost.com with tips, press releases, advertising inquiries, and concerns.

Partisan Clash Over Election System Security Looming In Senate

By Doug Sword

CQ Roll Call (DC), July 26, 2018

A partisan clash over Russian hacking of state elections systems appears to be coming to a head in the Senate, where a provision to add $250 million to a four-bill spending package for states to beef up election system security may be headed for a floor vote.

Democrats are using an announcement from the Election Assistance Commission and President Donald Trump's comments in Helsinki on July 16 to pressure Republicans to allow a floor vote on Sen. Patrick J. Leahy's amendment to provide $250 million in grant aid to states to secure election systems.

"Our states are under attack," Leahy, ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said on the floor Thursday. His amendment would provide the $250 million as part of the four-bill fiscal 2019 spending package that is expected to get a floor vote next week.

Watch: McConnell Warns Russians to Keep Out of Elections, Schumer Wants More Than Words

Republicans had opposed providing the additional money, saying that barely more than half the states had yet to ask for their shares of the $380 million earmarked for state election security in the fiscal 2018 budget. But the Election

Assistance Commission said July 16 that all states have filed applications and that 88 percent, or $334 million, of the funds had been disbursed.

The EAC statement was dated the same day that Trump, standing next to Russian President Vladimir Putin after their meeting in Helsinki, declined to endorse U.S. intelligence agencies' findings that the Russians had sought to influence the 2016 election. Trump cited Putin's denial of such interference and appeared to give the denial equal weight to the contradictory views of the administration's intelligence officials.

The White House has since walked the comments back and forth, but Democrats have seized on the issue during the appropriation process.

Republicans have also said that adding funds to the program for fiscal 2019, which begins Oct. 1, leaves insufficient time to get the money to states in time for any improvements before this November's midterm elections.

Leahy noted that the $380 million in grants became available only on March 23.

"In just the few months since then, states and territories, that's 55 in all, have requested funding — 100 percent of these funds have been committed, 90 percent of them have been dispensed," he said. "My amendment would provide the funding needed to help protect our elections, which we have been warned are once again being targeted. This Senate must be allowed to vote to defend this institution and our democracy."

Early last month, the EAC reported that 55 percent of the funds had yet to be requested and that 24 states had yet to make requests.

Senate Financial Services Appropriations Chairman James Lankford, R-Okla., referred to similar figures last month at the markup of the spending bill. He said he had filed legislation that would require reports on states' use of grant funds and would authorize more money for cybersecurity and modernization of election systems as needed.

CIO Dana Deasy Issues DoD's Action Plan To Protect Public-Facing Web Services

By Jane Edwards

ExecutiveGov, July 26, 2018

The Defense Department has announced plans to release by Aug. 17 a task order to facilitate the implementation of cybersecurity practices included in a binding operational directive from the Department of Homeland Security.

Dana Deasy, chief information officer at DoD, wrote a letter dated July 20 to Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., to provide details about the Pentagon's action plan to implement those cyber measures by the end of this year in order to safeguard public-facing email services and websites.

DoD will also issue a "roll out plan" by Dec. 31 for the implementation of the HTTP Strict Transport Security mechanism for all public-facing websites.

The letter was in response to Wyden's call in May for DoD to advance the adoption of the Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure encryption through HSTS on all public web services.

Deasy also offered details about DoD's implementation plan for the public trust public key infrastructure, Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance and STARTTLS encryption protocol.

Sen. Ron Wyden Urges Agencies To Abandon Adobe Flash, Citing 'Inherent Security Vulnerabilities'

By Andrew Blake

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Sen. Ron Wyden sent a letter Wednesday urging government agencies to start abandoning Adobe Flash, an antiquated and vulnerable multimedia software platform that will stop being maintained in nearly two years' time.

"I write to request that your agencies collaborate to end government use of Adobe Flash in light of its inherent security vulnerabilities and impending 'end-of-life' in 2020," Mr. Wyden, Oregon Democrat, wrote to officials at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security.

"While Flash will continue to exist past this point, it will no longer receive necessary technical support, significantly magnifying its existing cybersecurity deficiencies," the senator wrote.

First developed by FutureWave over 20 years ago, Flash was initially used as a graphics and animation tool before becoming one of the internet's most popular platforms for streaming audio and video the following decade. Macromedia acquired FutureWave in 1996, and by 2004 the company claimed that its proprietary Flash player was installed on more than 98 percent of internet-connected desktop computers.

Flash has been persistently plagued by vulnerabilities that have made the platform particularly prone to hackers, however, and Adobe said last year that it will stop maintaining the platform at the end of 2020, effectively abandoning efforts to fix any flaws existing after that point.

"As the three agencies that provide the majority of cybersecurity guidance to government agencies," Mr. Wyden wrote, NIST, NSA and DHS "must take every opportunity to ensure that federal workers are protected from cyber-threats and that the government is not intentionally supporting risky online behavior."

"To date, your agencies have yet to issue public guidance for the unavoidable transition away from Flash. A

critical deadline is looming — the government must act to prevent the security risk posed by Flash from reaching catastrophic levels."

Mr. Wyden concluded his letter by asking the agencies to work together to ensure the government does not deploy any new, Flash-based content on any federal websites, and starts removing existing Flash content from government websites and computers.

A DHS spokesperson told The Washington Times that the agency does not comment on congressional correspondence but will respond as appropriate. Representatives at neither NSA nor DHS immediately returned messages seeking comment.

The U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), a division of DHS, has warned of cybersecurity risks involving Flash since 2010, and each of the top 10 vulnerabilities targeted by hackers using exploit kits in 2015 related to Adobe Flash, the Solutionary cybersecurity firm concluded in a 2016 report.

Another Shipping Giant Falls Victim To Ransomware

By Lee Mathews

Forbes, July 26, 2018

The infamous NotPetya ransomware ran rampant last summer. One of its most high-profile victims was A.P. Moller-Maersk. The Dutch shipping giant was reportedly saddled with $200 million in costs related to the outbreak.

This week another major industry player was hit. Shanghai-based Cosco, the world's fourth-largest maritime shipper, reported a ransomware outbreak of its own.

Cosco has yet to reveal many details about the incident publicly. In fact, in a company press release there's no mention of ransomware. Instead the announcement refers to a "local network breakdown" affecting operations at its locations in the United States.

Internal emails sent to Cosco staff told a different story. According to a pair of maritime news sources that have seen the emails, staff were warned to be on the lookout for suspicious messages in their inboxes. Cosco locations outside the U.S. stepped up anti-malware defenses in hopes of preventing the infection from spreading overseas.

The situation at Cosco doesn't appear to be as dire as the one faced by Maersk in 2017. The NotPetya infection was so devastating that some of the company's vessels were stuck in port.

Cosco, on the other hand, seemed mostly to be having communications issues. Email and telephone services were impacted and the company's American website remains offline for the time being. Cosco stressed that its entire fleet was still operating normally and that its "main business operation systems" were stable.

Assuming that's an accurate assessment, it's very good news for Cosco. The company could have easily been staring down a protracted fight to recover its systems and a multi-hundred million dollar expense sheet. The full extent of the incident may not be known for some time – possibly when the company posts its results for the next fiscal quarter.

House Homeland Security Subcommittee Leaders, Witnesses Press For Cyber 'moonshot' At Hearing

By Maggie Miller

Inside Cybersecurity, July 26, 2018

House Homeland Security cybersecurity and infrastructure protection subcommittee Chairman John Ratcliffe (R-TX) called for a "cyber moonshot" program on Wednesday to improve federal agencies' cybersecurity, while keeping this separate from the moonshot program already launched.

"I have talked about a cyber moonshot and identifying an approach that will address some of the concerns that you related, and if you believe as I do that cybersecurity risks present perhaps our greatest national security threat right now and going forward, then we...

Rep. Devin Nunes Suggests Banning Electronic Voting Systems To Protect Election Integrity

By Andrew Blake

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Rep. Devin Nunes, the head of the House Intelligence Committee, has endorsed banning the use of electronic voting systems to reduce the risk of further election meddling.

"The one thing we've been warning about for many, many years on the intelligence committee is about the electronic voting systems. Those are really dangerous in my opinion, and should not be used," Mr. Nunes, California Republican, said in an interview aired Thursday on Hill.TV's "Rising."

"I think anybody that does that, and that's communicating over the web, it's going to be a challenge. So you have to make sure that you limit that as much as possible, and we need a paper trail so that you can go back in case you have to do a manual recount," Mr. Nunes added.

The congressman suggested banning electronic voting systems in response to a question raised concerning the state of election security, and particularly whether the November 2018 midterms will be able to withstand any potential interference on par with efforts waged during the 2016 U.S. presidential race.

Russian hackers set their sights on American computer systems during the 2016 race while conducting state-sponsored operations targeting the election itself and

particularly the campaign of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, according to U.S. officials.

Separate from breaching both the Democratic National Committee and the personal email account of Mrs. Clinton's campaign manager, John Podesta, Russian hackers also attempted to tamper with voting systems in at least 21 states, the Trump administration acknowledged previously.

In addition to stealing sensitive material from both the DNC and Clinton campaign, Russians also stole data involving roughly 500,000 voters from a state election board and successfully compromised a company that manufactures software used to verify voter registration information, the Department of Justice has determined. Special counsel Robert Mueller charged a dozen Russian military officials last month on related charges.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly denied meddling in the 2016 White House race. President Trump, meanwhile, said earlier this week that he's "very concerned that Russia will be fighting very hard to have an impact" on the November midterms and that he believed Moscow will try to aid Democratic candidates in 2018.

Mr. Putin admitted earlier this month that he wanted Mr. Trump to win the 2016 race, and the Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee concluded in May that Russia meddled in the race to hurt Mrs. Clinton's campaign.

New Scam Tries To Blackmail With Bogus Porn Threats

By Brooke Crothers

Fox News, July 26, 2018

A new email scam is making the rounds with bogus claims about pornography use to extort money.

In this scam, scammers email you claiming that they've stolen your password and have created videos of you using adult web sites. On top of that, they claim to have all of your contacts.

The good news it's a scam. But it can be terrifying for some. One woman, who was "in tears," called it "very frightening," according to a report in Canada's CBC.

A typical email reads something like this: "I know your password" and "I have installed malware on an adult video site." Then the claim gets more elaborate. "While you were watching video clips, your web browser began operating as a RDP (Remote Desktop) that has a key logger," is a typical threat.

This, the scammers claim, gives them access to your display screen and webcam. Then they drop the hammer, usually something to the effect: "If you ignore this, I will send your video to all of your contacts." Of course, they give you a way out: pay them money – usually $1,000 or more – and they promise to delete the video.

That's the gist of the many forms of this email that have appeared in forums, blogs and on Twitter. For example, one threatening email – similar to the wording above – was posted by ThreeShield Information Security, a Canadian firm.

What makes it scarier is, the scammers do you have your password in some cases, though it can be an old one.

"If you received an email like this one, we have good news and bad news for you: You weren't caught looking at porn; however, your LinkedIn password was exposed 6 years ago," according to a blog post by ThreeShield.

The security firm concluded that the scammer is harvesting email addresses and passwords from a 2012 LinkedIn hack that breached over 100 million accounts.

Threeshield added that they have tracked 9 bitcoin addresses associated with the scam, in which victims have paid a total of 4.61461859 Bitcoins or approximately $38,000.

FBI issues warning of adultery blackmail scam

This week, the FBI in Jacksonville, Florida warned about a similar blackmail scam that threatens to reveal information about acts of adultery.

"The scammer threatens to reveal the information to the recipient's spouse, family and friends, and demands payment in exchange for secrecy. In an effort to avoid detection, the scammer often insists on being paid in bitcoin, a virtual currency that is legitimate but difficult to track," the FBI said in a statement this week.

The FBI adds that this and similar scams will continue to evolve.

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

Competency Hearing Sought In Terrorist Support Case

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

CLEVELAND (AP) – The attorney for a man accused of scouting locations in Cleveland to attack people watching Fourth of July fireworks and who talked about carrying out additional bombings is requesting a competency hearing for his client.

Federal public defender Charles Fleming filed a motion Wednesday saying Demetrius Pitts has "longstanding mental concerns," and Fleming questions whether he is competent to stand trial. Cleveland.com reports that the attorney asked a judge to order a psychiatric or psychological examination and to hold a hearing after the medical report.

Pitts has been charged with trying to support terrorism.

Federal authorities said earlier that Pitts had expressed his support for al-Qaida for more than a year.

The attorney added that federal prosecutors do not object to the request.

The FBI arrested the 48-year-old Pitts on July 1. Officials have said he is an American citizen.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Teen Charged With Bringing Backpack Bomb To School To Be Tried As Adult

KSL-TV Salt Lake City, July 26, 2018

ST. GEORGE — A teenager accused of trying to make a backpack bomb and detonate it at a southern Utah high school will be tried as an adult.

Fifth District Juvenile Judge Paul Dame on Thursday ordered Martin Farnsworth, 16, to face felony charges of attempted murder and using a weapon of mass destruction in district court.

In March, Pine View High School Pine View High School was evacuated after students discovered the smoking backpack near a vending machine. No injuries were reported.

Prosecutors sought to transfer the case to district court where he would face charges as an adult, but the boy's defense attorney argued the juvenile system would have provided better treatment while still keeping the public safe.

"The state is very pleased with the outcome," Angela Adams, deputy Washington County attorney, said Thursday. "By having him charged in district court in the adult system, we feel like we can supervise him longer."

In testimony leading up to Thursday's decision, experts gave different views of the risk the teen may pose to the public. His parents testified he had been bullied, and a psychologist told the courtroom the teen is high-functioning on the autism spectrum, which affects how he deals with emotions.

Defense attorney Stephen Harris said the family on Thursday was absorbing the judge's decision and it was difficult to read the teen's reaction.

"We're naturally disappointed," Harris said, noting the incident happened just a few months after his client's 16th birthday.

"His family's concerned about him and his well-being. They also understand that these are serious charges, and hope they can be worked out in the public's interest and Martin's interest," Harris said.

He emphasized that he believes the teen would respond to treatment in Utah's juvenile system, which focuses on rehabilitating young offenders and can impose penalties such as fines, detention and probation.

Prosecutors argued the autism diagnosis did not fully explain the teen's behavior and said he had a plan to kill people. If he were convicted in the adult system, they argued, a judge would retain greater control of his case after sentencing and the teen could still get resources through the juvenile system until age 18.

Farnsworth is charged with use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempted murder, both first-degree felonies. In May, Dame ordered the teen to stand trial on those charges and others, saying there was enough evidence for the case to move forward.

The teen also is charged with painting "ISIS is comi--" on a school wall at Hurricane High School, and cutting up an American flag at the school and replacing it with a homemade ISIS flag. But those charges will remain in the juvenile system, the judge ruled, saying they were not part of the same episode.

In March, the teen told investigators he was responsible for the device, graffiti and flag, and that he did not really care if people got hurt, according to video shown in court.

A search of the teen's laptop showed he had read webpages on how to build bombs and a fuse and researched ISIS, an FBI agent testified in June. The device that started smoking could have started a large fire but would not have exploded, according to a bomb expert who testified in court.

The judge's order was immediate, and he is expected to issue a written analysis in the coming days. A hearing in 5th District Court has not yet been scheduled.

Shackles, A Lion Rug, 56 Beanie Babies: Aubrey Trail's Attorney Wants His Client's Property Preserved

By Riley Johnson

Hastings (NE) Tribune, July 26, 2018

An attorney for the man accused of the premeditated murder of Sydney Loofe wants a judge to stop a landlord from selling or destroying the items left behind in a Wilber apartment, where Loofe was last seen alive, according to court documents.

Left behind in Aubrey Trail and Bailey Boswell's basement apartment at 621 West Seventh St., were shackles, a lion rug, various elephant figurines and an assortment of stuffed animals that included 56 Beanie Babies, according to a notice made by the landlord.

The state has turned the apartment back over to the landlord, Alan Koll, who owns the home and rented the apartment to Trail.

Koll informed Trail on July 17 that he needed to claim his property by month's end or pay the cost of storage, nearly $2,900, or it would be sold or destroyed, according to court records. Koll did not return a request for comment Wednesday night.

That prompted Trail's court-appointed attorneys to file motions Wednesday for a judge to give them time to inspect the apartment they believe is the alleged murder scene and order the preservation of the property for testing of possible evidence.

"Preservation of the scene and the evidence contained within it is vital and material to the defendant's defense," Ben Murray said in his motion.

According to investigators, Loofe went to the home while on a date with Boswell on Nov. 15.

The Lincoln woman's family reported her missing the next day after she didn't report to work at Menards.

Her dismembered remains were found in rural Clay County on Dec. 4.

Investigators believe Boswell and Trail bought items used in Loofe's killing earlier Nov. 15, and that she died of homicidal violence.

They allege the 24-year-old was strangled overnight Nov. 15 using an electrical cord.

Trail has told investigators and news reporters Loofe's death was an accident.

The inventory includes clues to what investigators have focused on in the apartment, including the washer and dryer, which reportedly had parts removed by the FBI, and several empty picture frames from the master bedroom.

Most of the items described in the inventory are routine household items. However, some tell of the antique dealing Trail had conducted, including old Civil War memorabilia, old electric train parts, cast-iron toys, coin display holders and an 1853 Jewish bible, the inventory said.

Trail and Boswell's antique dealings first gained notoriety following their arrests in late November as persons of interest in Loofe's disappearance.

They have since been convicted of a fraudulent rare coin scheme that duped a Kansas couple out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Both Trail and Boswell face charges of first-degree murder and unlawful disposal of human remains in Loofe's death.

The Nebraska Attorney General's Office is seeking the death penalty in Trail's prosecution. A decision on whether to seek the death penalty in Boswell's case has not been made public.

Both remain at the Saline County jail without bond.

Boswell is set to be arraigned next month.

Fight Against Terror Entering A New Phase, Still Just As Vital

By Ilan Berman And Chloe Thompson

USA Today, July 26, 2018

The war on terror now ranks as America's longest-running war. Yet, increasingly, the fight against terrorism has receded from the headlines, supplanted by acrimonious domestic politics and flashpoints like North Korea's nuclear program and trade disputes with China. Yet the war on terror still rages on — and the battlefield in that fight is changing significantly.

In the Middle East, the military campaign waged by the U.S. and its coalition partners over the past two years may have successfully degraded the Islamic State group's physical "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria. But the group's message and appeal continue to resonate, promulgated via the Internet and social media as part of a sophisticated global media strategy. Moreover, the Islamic State now also poses a different sort of threat, as the "alumni" of its radical proto-state in Syria and Iraq (who hail from more than 80 different nations) begin returning to their countries of origin.A new round of terrorist threats

Other terror groups, meanwhile, have flourished in the shadows, aided by America's preoccupation with the Islamic State group. Once on its heels as a result of coalition operations in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda has used the past several years to reconstitute its networks and rebrand itself as a more authentic and moderate local alternative to the Islamic State, with significant results. Experts now say that the Bin Laden network controls more territory than at any time in its history, and has positioned itself as a long-term threat to the West. The Taliban, too, is resurgent in Afghanistan, where it once again poses a growing challenge to that country's weak central government. And in Africa, groups like Nigeria's Boko Haram and Ethiopia's al-Shabaab continue to threaten the continental peace, despite the best efforts of local authorities.

More: Donald Trump takes North Korea approach to reopen Iran negotiations — Mullahs should listen

4 ways to contain Trump and prevent global wreckage after Helsinki and NATO summits

Donald Trump policies are hurting Palestinians and Middle East peace prospects

Indeed, countries the world over are now grappling with a new round of terrorist threats — one driven by the Islamic State group's collapse, as well as by the resurgence of local extremism. Recent attacks in places like Surabaya, Indonesia, and plots such as the thwarted attempt to bomb a July Fourth parade in Cleveland, Ohio point to the fact that the Islamic State group and its ideological fellow travelers continue to wield the power to inspire, mobilize and threaten democratic societies.Experts are ringing the alarm bells

Security professionals in the United States and Europe understand this very well, even if the general public and political elites increasingly do not. Indeed, Europol, Europe's continent-wide law enforcement authority, recently classified the threat of terrorism in Europe as "high," despite the decline of the Islamic State. Europe's vulnerability stems from the large-scale migration from the Middle East and North Africa that has taken place over the past half-decade — migration that Islamic extremists have tried to exploit in order to penetrate the eurozone. Meanwhile, the enduring appeal of the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and their assorted local affiliates

have prompted various nations from Central Asia to North Africa to step up their efforts to fight extremism ideologically.

What these experts and governments know should be more broadly understood here at home. The past decade has seen the United States score major strategic victories against the Bin Laden network, its affiliates and its offshoots (like the Islamic State). But America should not be lulled into a false sense of security by these successes. Continued vigilance and research is needed in order to understand the ongoing challenge posed by Islamic radicalism — and for American policymakers to be able to properly craft policies capable of addressing the changing nature of the terrorist threat.

Ilan Berman is senior vice president at the American Foreign Policy Council. Chloe Thompson is a research fellow at the council, and managing editor of its "World Almanac of Islamism."

Pelosi Refers To 9/11 Terror Attacks As 'Incident' During Border-security Remarks

By Douglas Ernst

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi used her weekly press conference on Thursday to rhetorically downgrade the September 11, 2001 terror attacks to an "incident."

A discussion on the Trump administration's immigration policies took a macabre turn when the California Democrat focused on the deadly terror attacks orchestrated by Osama bin Laden. Mrs. Pelosi claimed that Republicans were historically weaker on border security than Democrats because they balked on some of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

"We have a responsibility to protect our borders. All of our borders," Mrs. Pelosi said. "Let's make no mistake about that. Democrats have been strong on that point. All of our borders. In fact, I said to some of you before, when we had the 9/11 incident and the commission was formed — and they made their recommendations — they made recommendations to protect America, but the Republicans would never take them up. And some of it was about our borders. The Republicans would never take them up."

The lawmaker said it wasn't until 2006 that appropriate border security legislation was pursued.

"It took until we won in '06 — first bill on the floor, H.R. 1 — to enact the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission," she said.

The Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks by al Qaeda killed 2,977 victims in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.

Bin Laden was killed May 2, 2011, by SEAL Team 6 during Operation Neptune's Spear in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

State Department Working To Kill Sanctions On Terrorist Use Of Human Shields

By Adam Kredo

Washington Free Beacon, July 26, 2018

The Trump administration's State Department is working to quash new legislation that would sanction international terror groups for using human shields, a battlefield tactic employed Hezbollah and Hamas, according to multiple U.S. officials familiar with the administration's behind-the-scenes effort to nix the legislation.

A bipartisan team of lawmakers, led by Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas), recently introduced new legislation that would enable the United States to impose harsh sanctions on any foreign person or group caught using human shields during combat. The bill is the first of its kind to be introduced in the United States.

Human shields, which are routinely used by terror groups, enable terrorists to inflate the number of civilian casualties and avoid military reprisals from more conventional forces. The U.S. and Israeli governments are one of a number of countries who have been dealing with the use of human shields by these terror groups for years.

While the new legislative effort to target terrorists who force civilians into dangerous combat zones quickly won bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, the Trump administration's State Department has quietly been working for months to kill the bill and prevent lawmakers from moving the legislation, multiple U.S. officials told to the Washington Free Beacon.

The State Department is said to be opposed to the legislation due to its hesitance to sanction groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, where the United States continues to provide massive amounts of military aid that has repeatedly made its way to Hezbollah forces.

U.S. officials in the State Department ignored formal requests from lawmakers for months as they tried to mount the new legislative effort, sources said, and tensions are said to have boiled over earlier this week as the State Department continued efforts to block the bill.

The State Department objected to the public dissemination of the number of rockets Hezbollah currently has aimed at Israel, according to U.S. officials who spoke to the Free Beacon. Findings in the bill say the rockets number around 150,000.

U.S. officials familiar with the situation expressed outrage over the State Department's behind-the-scenes effort to kill the legislation, particularly in light of President Donald Trump's tough rhetoric on terrorists and efforts to thwart the regional groups.

"The list of grievances is so haphazard and random, it feels like they just flipped through the bill looking for things to object to," one U.S. official familiar with the State Department

effort told the Free Beacon. The source would only speak on background about the sensitive and ongoing situation.

"So when you read their concerns, at the top are these huge things about the structure of the bill itself, then a random bullet point where they say we shouldn't tell people how many missiles Hezbollah has because that's scary, then back to saying that the whole bill is impossible," the source explained.

A second U.S. official familiar with the matter confirmed the State Department's opposition to the legislation, telling the Free Beacon that officials in the department's legislative affairs office should have done a better job at responding to lawmakers' repeated requests pertaining to the bill.

Other sources familiar with the State Department's efforts against the bill wondered if bureaucrats are working to undermine Secretary Mike Pompeo, whom they view as a likely supporter of the effort.

The State Department's opposition is similar to separate efforts to suppress the publication of a major report on the number of Palestinian refugees that is believed to be a potential game changer in how the United States allocates millions in funding in the region.

Pro-Israel organizations and prominent advocacy organizations have already thrown their support behind the human shields legislation.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, the nation's leading pro-Israel group, is one of numerous groups backing the bill.

"This legislation is needed because terrorist groups—including Hamas, Hezbollah, and ISIS—are blatantly violating international law by placing their terrorist infrastructure amongst civilian populations and hiding behind innocent civilians as they carry out armed attacks," an AIPAC spokesperson told the Free Beacon.

Christians United for Israel, or CUFI, another large pro-Israel group, has been lobbying in favor of the bill as it holds its annual conference this week in Washington, D.C.

Scores of CUFI activists recently took to Capitol Hill to lobby lawmakers to back the bill.

The State Department declined Free Beacon requests for comment, saying that it is the department's official policy not to comment on pending legislation.

Cruz's bill—which is already backed by Sens. Joe Donnelly (D., Ind.), John Cornyn (R., Tex.), Richard Blumenthal (D., Conn.), and Marco Rubio (R., Fla.), among others—outlines how regional terror groups continue to employ human shields in a bid to inflate the number of civilian casualties.

In addition to Hamas and Hezbollah, the bill would target companies that work with these terror groups to build facilities where they store munitions. Any international terror group would be subject to sanctions under the bill if caught employing human shields.

"America, Israel, and our other allies are engaged in a fight against radical Islamic terrorist organizations, from Hamas and Hezbollah to al Qaeda and ISIS, who cynically use human shields against us," Cruz said in a statement when the legislation was introduced.

"Unfortunately, organizations like the United Nations incentivize this barbaric tactic by blaming civilized countries, who do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties, for whatever civilian casualties that do occur," Cruz said. "The United States should hold accountable the monsters who commit these war crimes. This bill will impose consequences on those who enable and facilitate the use of human shields."

U.S. Allies Have Killed Thousands Of Yemeni Civilians From The Air. After 22 Died At A Wedding, One Village Asks, 'Why Us?'

By Sudarsan Raghavan

Washington Post, July 25, 2018

The ground where the wedding tent once stood was covered with children's slippers, broken musical instruments, pieces of festive clothing and other detritus of destroyed lives. Teeth, still attached to the jawbone, lay near some tattered decorations.

"There is even some flesh left," said Elan Yahya, the bride's father, pointing at blackened shards hanging from a tree branch.

An airstrike hit the wedding in this remote mountain village on April 23, killing 22 civilians, including eight children, and injuring dozens, according to interviews with 17 villagers in late May. More than three years into Yemen's civil war, more than 16,000 civilians have been killed and injured, the vast majority by airstrikes, the U.N. human rights office estimates, adding that the figures are likely to be far higher.

The deaths are continuing unabated, with as many as hundreds of casualties per month, despite assurances by a U.S.-backed regional coalition of better protection of civilians amid mounting criticism within the United States and the international community.

Body parts are seen on the site of the explosion. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

That coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, is backing Yemen's exiled government in its conflict against rebels known as the Houthis, who dominate the capital and the north. The United States is playing an essential role in the war, supporting the coalition with intelligence, refueling, technical assistance and billions of dollars in bombs and other weaponry.

The coalition is the only actor in the conflict that uses warplanes, mostly U.S.- and British-made fighter jets. The airstrikes have struck hospitals, schools, markets, motels, migrant boats, gas stations, even funeral gatherings, raising

questions about the coalition's ability to abide by humanitarian laws that call for civilians to be safeguarded.

A month after the airstrike in Raqah, the destruction on the ground remained eerily preserved. The lives of the survivors, however, had been forever altered.

"We lost our minds that day," said Amna Yahya, the groom's mother. "I still can't comprehend what happened. Why us?"

U.S.-made munitions

The growing civilian casualties across Yemen have led to widespread denouncement of the U.S. role and calls in Congress to halt or regulate U.S. weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally in the Middle East. Despite the concern, President Trump announced $110 billion in new arms sales last year to the kingdom, weapons that most analysts expect will be used in Yemen.

In the hours following the airstrike in Raqah, local media published photos, provided by the Houthis, showing the bomb was a GBU-12 Paveway II precision-guided bomb, manufactured by Raytheon, the Massachusetts-based defense contractor, according to Bellingcat, an investigative website. The Washington Post could not independently verify whether the bomb was used in the attack.

But visits to other bombed sites by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch confirm that U.S.-made munitions, including banned cluster bombs and Paveway bombs, have been used in attacks that have killed and injured civilians. The Post saw remnants of U.S.-made bombs in the capital, Sanaa, and in the southwestern city of Taiz.

After the Senate narrowly approved a $510 million first installment of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia in June 2017, the kingdom said it would launch a training program to reduce accidental targeting of civilians. But in the year after that announcement, civilian deaths were 7 percent higher than the year before, U.N. data shows. In April alone, there were 236 civilians killed and 238 injured — the deadliest month this year so far.

A U.N. report last month found that 1,316 Yemeni children were killed or injured last year and that more than half of the casualties resulted from airstrikes.

A Saudi government official disputed the U.N. figures and said the coalition is "implementing the highest standard measures to prevent civilian casualties," including "continuous training" of its staff and efforts to improve rules of engagement. The attack on Raqah was under internal investigation, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity.

Human rights activists welcome such efforts but say the coalition's probing of airstrikes' aftermath remains hollow. "There is no genuine follow-up on their international human rights obligations and their commitment to respecting humanitarian laws," said Rasha Mohamed, Yemen researcher for Amnesty International.

Raqah is a remote village in the Houthi-controlled province of Hajjah. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

Raytheon spokesman Michael Doble said the company does not comment "on the military actions of our allies or customers." Its sales of munitions to Saudi Arabia, he said, were reviewed and approved by Congress, the Pentagon and the State Department, and so "reflect the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States government and are in compliance with U.S. law."

In a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in March, Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of the Pentagon's Central Command, said the U.S. military does not track coalition missions using U.S.-refueled warplanes and cannot determine whether the aircraft or U.S. munitions were involved in airstrikes that have killed civilians.

Raqah is in a rugged region in the northern Yemeni province of Hajjah. The sprawling village of about 700 residents is about a three-hour drive from the provincial capital, a place so remote that to reach it requires crossing dry river beds and driving up goat paths.

The civil war that emerged from the political chaos following the 2011 Arab Spring revolts hardly touched the villagers, mostly farmers and herders. Many supported former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was ousted in 2012. But even after the Houthis swept into Sanaa and pushed out the internationally recognized government, the conflict did not come to their area, villagers said.

The groom, Yahya Jaffer, stands on the site of the attack. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

The father of the bride, Elan Yahya, stands inside one of the buildings damaged by the explosion. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

Mohammed Yahya, uncle of the groom, stands on the roof of one of the buildings damaged by the blast. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

They said they would often see and hear warplanes and unmanned drones fly above their huts, but they never felt threatened. They had nothing to do, they said, with the Shiite Houthis or Iran, which is backing the rebels. The Sunni Muslim coalition entered the war to prevent Tehran from gaining a regional foothold through Yemen.

"There are no Houthis here," said Yahya Ahmed, a villager whose nephew was killed in the airstrike. "Did you see any checkpoints in our area?"

Across northern Yemen, rebel checkpoints are ubiquitous. But in and around Raqah, there were none. Nor were there visible signs of military activity. Villagers said that there were no military bases in the area and that none of their men were fighting with the rebels.

The only time they had seen rebels in recent memory was the morning after the airstrike, when some Houthi officials arrived to assess the damage.

"We refused to join the Houthis," said Mohammed Yahya, the groom's uncle. "One side says, 'God is great.' The other side says, 'God is great.' We don't know who is right."

'There was blood everywhere'

The wedding of Yahya Jaffer and his bride, Fatma, began auspiciously enough. They were both 20 years old, both from the al-Musabi tribe. Like their parents and grandparents, they were marrying within their community. They are cousins.

The families had spent much of their savings on the wedding. A large white tent was erected in front of their home. More than 150 guests drank soft drinks and water and feasted on lamb and other delicacies. A group of local folkloric dancers and musicians entertained, according to the recollections of villagers present at the event.

Kamel Yahya sits in the hut where the newlywed couple now live. Kamel's right arm and leg were injured in the attack. He says he has shrapnel that has not been removed. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

Many villagers said they heard two planes circling above their homes throughout that day, as well as just before the attack.

"An hour later, one of them hit us," Amna Yahya said.

It was shortly after 10 p.m. By then, most parents and the elderly had left the wedding. The youths clapped to the rhythm of drums and lutes. Some sang, others chanted, as the dancers skipped and leaped in celebration. Then, a thunderous sound.

"I saw a flash of red, and I lost consciousness," Jaffer recalled. "When I woke up, I heard people screaming in pain. People had lost arms and legs. There was blood everywhere."

Those who could searched through the rubble for survivors, pulling them to safety. Others struggled to find the dead: Most were coated by ash or torn to pieces.

The only way Aitan Suwaed said he recognized his 17-year-old son, Hamdi, was "from his clothes, the parts that weren't burnt."

The 22 fatalities included 12 of the dancers, four musicians and six villagers, including one who played the lute. Most of the children killed were in the dance troupe.

The dancers all belonged to the Muhamasheen, Yemen's most marginalized ethnic group. Performing at weddings was among the few jobs they could find.

For 10 of them, only pieces of their bodies were found, so they are buried in two mass graves. "It's all my family," said Ahmed Rifaei, 37, a dancer who survived.

The living, too, are in bad shape.

Some of Raqah's residents have lost their hearing. Children have lost limbs, while others carry shrapnel inside their bodies. The nearest hospital is in the provincial capital, and most villagers cannot afford the three-hour journey.

Hamza Yahya, a member of the groom's family, stands near his damaged vehicle. He was injured in the explosion. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/for The Washington Post)

Yahya Ahmed not only lost his nephew. His wife, Noora, was four months pregnant. When she heard the bombing, she started screaming uncontrollably. The next morning, she had a miscarriage, he said.

Other women and children in the village report having nightmares where they relive the bombing. One woman was in such shock that she feared leaving her bed. Whenever she needed to go to the bathroom, her relatives carried her. Other villagers said they now sleep outside their houses at night out of concern that their homes would be targeted by airstrikes.

"What happened to us, happened to everyone in the village," said Amna Yahya. "Everyone is full of fear."

Many are also filled with anger, not just at the Saudi-led coalition, but at the United States. "If it wasn't for the American aircraft, Saudi Arabia would never strike Yemen," said Mohammed Yahya, the groom's uncle. "America gives them weapons, and the Saudis hit us."

Some villagers have fled to other areas rather than risk being targeted by another airstrike. But the vast majority don't have that option, including the bride and groom. With their family house destroyed, the couple live in their animal shed, next to cows and goats, their abode reeking of hay and animal urine. They are married in principle but not legally: They can no longer afford to pay for their wedding certificate. So it hasn't been signed by the local marriage official.

On a chair in the shed is the white traditional Yemeni robe that Jaffer wore at his wedding. It is now bloodstained. He has no intention of cleaning it.

"I will keep this to always remember what happened," he said.

Amna Yahya, the mother of the groom, works near the shack where her son now lives with his wife.

Europe's Prisons Breed Terrorism. Can Anything Be Done?

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

Want smart analysis of the most important news in your inbox every weekday along with other global reads, interesting ideas and opinions to know? Sign up for the Today's WorldView newsletter.

When Benjamin Herman went to prison for assault and robbery in 2003, he was a Catholic teen from the town of Rochefort. By the time he was given a two-day home leave this May, he was an avowed Islamist. Within hours of his temporary release, he murdered two female police officers and used their stolen weapons to kill a passing motorist.

Herman's transformation is not an anomaly. Europe's prisons have become a hotbed of Islamic radicalization, particularly as 1,500 Islamic State fighters have returned from the Middle East and faced prosecution. "Never have so many people been arrested on charges related to terrorism, and never have we seen so many of these guys in prison together," Thomas Renard, a Belgian terrorism expert and researcher at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels, told my colleagues. "In bringing them together, we are facilitating their ability to recruit. And that is something that will stay with us for a long time."

Two of my colleagues, Souad Mekhennet and Joby Warrick, spent months visiting prisons across Europe to understand how people become radicalized — and what countries on the continent are trying to do to stop this from happening. Their article includes looks inside prison cells in Belgium and Germany, two countries that have adopted sharply divergent strategies. Today's WorldView spoke with Warrick about his and Mekhennet's reporting.

Today's WorldView: You write that prisons have become the latest battleground in the evolving fight against Islamist-inspired terrorism. Why are jails particularly conducive to radicalization?

Joby Warrick: Throughout the history of the modern Islamist movement, prisons have served as incubators for terrorist groups. Radicalized individuals, when cut off from family and other moderating influences and subjected to what they see as unjust punishment, often become more angry and more radical. Inside prisons, they find themselves surrounded by troubled young men who are looking for an identity and a cause. For extremists, prison becomes an opportunity to deepen their own ideological commitment while also helping to train and recruit the next generation.

French police officers stand in a street after a hostage-taking at a church near Rouen, France. (Pascal Rossignol/Reuters)

Radicalization is nothing new, and rehabilitation efforts have been going on for years. What's new or important about either subject in 2018?

JW: It's partly a matter of scale. The current population of inmates in Europe includes hundreds who traveled to Syria to fight for the Islamic State or al-Qaeda, or to be part of the caliphate. Many who returned home were immediately imprisoned, and there's a high risk that some of those will seek to recruit others, or try to carry out attacks after their release. In addition, the strain of Islamist ideology embraced by some of these returnees is more extreme and more violent, compared with what we've seen in the past.

In your story, you focus on prisons in Belgium and Germany. What does the problem look like in other parts of Europe?

JW: We focused on Belgium and Germany because both countries saw large numbers of their citizens travel to Syria and Iraq. Belgium, for example, had the highest number of Islamic State emigres per capita in Europe. But numerous other countries are grappling with the same problem and experimenting with different solutions. France, for example, has developed an intelligence service that works inside its prisons to try to penetrate and disrupt terrorist cells. Other countries are seeking to block would-be returnees from coming home at all. Each country is acutely aware of the potential political fallout if a former Islamic State member leaves prison and then commits a terrorist act.

How have European officials tried to fight radicalization?

JW: What we discovered is that countries don't have ready solutions, so they are inventing new approaches and methods for dealing with the problem in real time. Often, the solutions differ dramatically from one country or region to another.

For example, Belgium has developed a program known as DeRadex, which isolates the most radicalized inmates from the rest of the prison population and allows them only limited contact with one another. Belgium's approach doesn't seek "deradicalization" per se — they argue that prisons aren't really equipped to change an individual's ideology and can only hope to discourage violence.

Germany, by contrast, rejects the idea of isolating inmates who embrace radical ideologies, opting instead for a program of intense monitoring and intervention to prevent radicalization from occurring. Officials in both countries say they don't yet have enough data to know which approaches truly work.

People take part in a rally in Turin's Palazzo di Citta in memory of the victims of bombings in Brussels in 2016. (Marco Bertorello/AFP/Getty Images)

Over the course of your reporting, you found that European officials had become much more aggressive about imprisoning people with links to terrorism. In the near future though, almost all of those men and women will be getting out of prison. If deradicalization tactics don't work, what are the biggest risks as those people are freed?

JW: That's what keeps European counterterrorism officials awake at night. Across Europe, there are about 1,500 returnees — women and children as well as men. Some are already back in their neighborhoods, and those who are in prison are serving sentences averaging between three and five years in cases where there is no hard evidence of violent behavior. Experts say there's a high likelihood that at least a few of those inmates will remain just as committed to the Islamic State and its ideals at the time of their release.

What stance have European politicians taken?

JW: European countries were profoundly shaken by the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016, and also by the refugee crisis. The political imperative to stop terrorism at all costs was behind many of the tough new laws passed by European

parliaments over the last three years. They essentially ensure that anyone who joined the jihad in Iraq or Syria will be charged with a crime and placed in jail. Those laws are highly popular but do little to address the long-term challenge of radicalization that many of these countries face. The solution will involve years of investment in areas such as economic development and education — and so far no political consensus has emerged for those kinds of reforms.

CORRECTION: An earlier version of this story incorrectly identified Benjamin Herman's hometown.

OTHER DHS NEWS

Portland, Ore., To Clean Up 'Disgusting' Occupy ICE Camp, Calling It Biohazard

By Lukas Mikelionis

Fox News, July 26, 2018

City officials in Portland, Ore., say they'll be cleaning up the "disgusting" Occupy ICE camp after police cleared the area of protesters Wednesday.

The mayor's office said it would pick up a portion of the tab for the clean-up, FOX 12 reported. Meanwhile, the Portland Police Bureau has cordoned off the site, calling it a biohazard.

Activists set up the camp near the local office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement after an outcry over the agency's crackdown on illegal immigrants.

The protesters advocated abolishing the agency, an objective that is increasingly being embraced by top mainstream Democrats in Congress, including U.S. Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

"It was pretty disgusting that that's how they were living back there," Frank Savage, a Portland resident who lives near the camp, told the outlet.

"It was pretty disgusting that that's how they were living back there. Getting tired of waking up to the bullhorn and the sounds and the cussing."

– Frank Savage, Portland, Ore., resident who lives near the Occupy ICE camp

He said that the area was littered by the protesters but is now relieved that things will go back to normal. "Getting tired of waking up to the bullhorn and the sounds and the cussing," he added.

Debris being cleared Wednesday included wooden pallets, makeshift toilets, books, toys, plastic containers, liquor bottles, tents and furniture, photos published by the Oregonian showed.

Mayor Ted Wheeler publicly ordered the Occupy ICE protesters to leave the camp Monday, but they ignored the mayor's request.

That prompted Portland police to step in and clear the protesters. No tickets or arrests were made in the process.

"For the most part everything was done with very little incident," police Chief Danielle Outlaw said.

This was the second time authorities had to intervene to disperse the protesters in Portland who set up camps. Last month, Homeland Security police had to clear out activists who occupied an ICE building in the city in protest of President Trump's zero-tolerance policy toward immigration and the separation of migrant children from their parents.

As officers were clearing up the building, protesters were heard chanting "No racist police!" and some activists were pointing in each of the officers' faces and calling them "Nazis."

The city is having contractors clean up the mess left by the activists. The efforts will also receive help from Multnomah County inmates, who will receive work-time credit and other financial incentives, the sheriff's office reportedly said.

The camp was set up on land owned by the city and TriMet, a public agency in charge of the public transit system in Portland's metropolitan area.

A TriMet official said they don't know why the protesters who started the camp can't be held accountable for the costs associated with cleaning the area.

"I can't answer that. I just don't think there is a mechanism to reimburse for the cost," the official told FOX 12.

The city doesn't yet have an estimate of the total cost of the cleanup.

Lukas Mikelionis is a reporter for FoxNews.com. Follow him on Twitter @LukasMikelionis.

In Attempt To Save The Rarest Marine Mammal, Court Orders A Ban On Mexican Seafood Imports

By Rosanna Xia

Los Angeles Times, July 26, 2018

To protect one of the most endangered species in the world, an international trade court judge ordered the Trump administration Thursday to ban all seafood harvested with gill nets in Mexico's northern Gulf of California — a bold move with significant political and economic consequences.

The order to save the vaquita porpoise, nicknamed "panda of the sea" for its chubby frame and black-ringed eyes, comes despite arguments from the U.S. government that a ban could negatively impact ongoing negotiations with Mexico. Earlier this week, the U.S Attorney General's office tried to get the court to delay its decision for 30 days.

The ban, which impacts an estimated $16-million worth of fish and shrimp, was a victory for conservationists who brought this issue to court in March after a decade of rescue

efforts failed to prevent vaquita from getting fatally entangled in gill nets in Mexico's waters.

Scientists say the vaquita population has dwindled from 567 in 1997 to fewer than 20 today. Its population drops about half each year. The species' range is about 1,500 square miles — the smallest of any marine mammal. Its territory overlaps with commercial fisheries that catch shrimp, curvina, chano and sierra, as well as illegal fishing operations that target the endangered totoaba.

Conservationists hope the embargo would put pressure on the Mexican government to ban the use of gill nets — vertical walls of mesh that snag fish by their gills when they try to escape — and indiscriminately capture vaquita as well.

"For 20 years, the Mexican government has promised to save the vaquita but failed to take meaningful action. That has to change or we'll lose these animals forever," said Sarah Uhlemann, international program director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "With vaquitas on the brink of extinction, these economic sanctions are painful but necessary to push Mexican officials to finally protect these little porpoises."

Trade experts said this ban, while addressing a serious environmental problem that both governments have failed to resolve, does not help the many other issues currently challenging U.S.-Mexico relations.

"With a difficult renegotiation of NAFTA pending, a trade skirmish over U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs underway and potential auto tariffs on the horizon, the timing of this import ban is pretty awful in terms of bilateral relations," said Christopher Wilson, deputy director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center. "But with the vaquita population dipping ... perhaps nearing the single-digits, the timing is clearly much worse for the porpoise."

U.S. Court of International Trade Judge Gary Katzmann, in his call for a preliminary injunction, found that the cost of the vaquita's disappearance was greater than the cost of implementing a ban to save the species.

"What cannot be disputed is that the vaquita's plight is desperate, and that even one more bycatch death in the gill nets of fisheries in its range threatens the very existence of the species," Katzmann wrote.

The ban will be in effect until the case is fully argued on its merits. To lift the ban, Mexico must meet U.S. standards, which conservationists say entail improving regulations and enforcement to ensure vaquita are not being killed in gill nets. Failure of the Trump administration to implement the ban would be illegal and a direct violation of a federal judge's order.

Katzmann issued the order after hearing arguments presented by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Agatha Koprowski, a Department of Justice attorney representing defendants such as Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, and Chris Oliver, assistant administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Koprowski argued that a judicially imposed import ban could threaten high-level negotiations between the United States and Mexico regarding the fate of the vaquita and undermine Mexico's trust in the U.S. as a negotiating partner.

"As a result, Mexico might refuse to implement measures it would have otherwise considered," Koprowski said in court documents. The Department of Justice on Thursday declined to comment on the court injunction.

Conservationists' argument hinged on the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act, a landmark 1972 law mandating the United States to protect not just domestic marine mammals, but also foreign whales, dolphins and porpoises. This includes requiring bans on seafood imports from foreign fisheries that kill marine mammals at a rate that would violate U.S. standards for domestic fishers.

"At a time where we're seeing so many of our environmental laws under attack, it's really great to see one being utilized by the court to do exactly what it was meant to do," said Natural Resources Defense Council attorney Giulia Good Stefani. "We hope that this will catalyze the U.S. and Mexico negotiations and speed up Mexico's willingness to enact the regulations necessary to protect the vaquita."

Embargoes, she said, catalyzed a similar transition to dolphin-safe tuna and turtle-safe shrimp trawling.

In documents filed with the court in a related lawsuit, Mexico's National Chamber of Fisheries and Aquaculture Industries argued the protection act lacks the authority to impose an emergency ban on foreign fish products. A dismissal, it added, would provide Mexico's regulatory authorities with more time to improve vaquita protection measures.

Tighter control of the fishing industry may also help reduce the number of vaquitas killed in gill nets that poachers use to snare a large endangered fish known as the totoaba, whose swim bladder is prized on the black market in China. Authorities say the illegal totoaba trade is more lucrative than cocaine trafficking.

Tensions have been escalating among conservationists, Mexican fishermen, whose livelihoods are threatened by tighter fishing controls, and totoaba poachers.

"There's no doubt that this embargo will have an impact on local fisherman, and we recognize that totoaba fishing is a big part of the problem," said Good Stefani, the Natural Resources Defense Council attorney. "But we hope that a ban on gill nets, limited to this particular region, will also help enforcement of the totoaba fishery, because right now enforcement is complicated by the fact that some gill nets remain legal."

Sunshine Rodriguez, who represents fishermen in the small seaside town of San Felipe, said Thursday's decision was unfair. He and other fishermen insist that the gill nets

they use to catch shrimp and other small fish are not strong enough to entrap the much larger vaquita.

"The U.S. and these conservationists don't have any evidence whatsoever that our nets have caught a vaquita," he said. "We are not the killers of the vaquita."

Rodriguez said the ruling will hurt his community in the short-term, but does not pose an existential threat to the region's fishing industry.

"It's a global market, and we're going to have to find alternative buyers," he said, citing high demand in China. Ultimately, it might be U.S. businesses that feel the brunt of the ban, he said, "because they're not going to have access to white wild shrimp at a decent price."

Times staff writer Kate Linthicum contributed to this report from Mexico City.

Number Of Occupy ICE Protesters Growing Outside Tampa's DHS Buildin

WFTS-TV Tampa (FL), July 26, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — Since the occupation of the sidewalk in front of the Department of Homeland Security building started eight days ago, the number of people participating in the protest has tripled.

A couple of tents in the middle of a tiny patch of mosquito-infested grass now spans the entire sidewalk in front of the building.

On Thursday, someone dropped off chili to the group. The atmosphere felt like a tailgate party. The giant pop up canopy tent filled with fold-out chairs, water, snacks, and of course the chili.

"We are prepared," Caitlin Bray said. Bray is with the group Democratic Socialists of America.

The protesters telling ABC Action News they won't move until U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is abolished.

Bray said the group is emboldened by the fact that the Trump administration has still failed to unite hundreds of children separated from their families at the border with their parents.

"It just reaffirms that we need to be out here and that this is very important," Bray said.

Not everyone feels the same way. Anibal Cabrera is with the Tampa Bay Young Republicans. Cabrera said the occupation of the public space in front of the ICE headquarters is a waste of time.

"This dog and pony show that these demonstrators are trying to show up in front of these departments are just showing their inability to show what's truly happening with immigration," Cabrera said. "This isn't something that's going to get resolved in a few weeks or a month. This needs serious people, to have a serious conversation and not just demonstrators in the streets and demand something like a 3-year-old."

Bray said their group isn't being childish. They are working to help refugees fleeing horrific circumstances to live a better life in America.

"We are taking a stand on something that is very important," Bray said. "If it means changing society and having a better and positive future that is not wasting time at all."

As of Thursday morning, the government said it reunited 1,442 children five and older with their parents in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody. An additional 378 were reunited with parents in different locations around the country or given to sponsors, who are often relatives or close family members.

That leaves about 700 who remain apart, including 431 children whose parents have been deported, officials say. Those reunions take more effort and paperwork as authorities fly children back to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

According to the administration, parents of 120 children waived reunification, while 67 had "red flags" for criminal history or other reasons during the review.

The Trump administration insisted it would meet the court deadline by reuniting all of the family members that it deemed eligible for reunification.

GLOBAL MEDIA

Report: Italy Deports Convicted Islamic State Recruiter

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

MILAN (AP) – An Italian news agency reports that authorities have deported a Slovenian man who completed a prison sentence for recruiting extremists to join Islamic State fighters in Syria.

ANSA said Thursday that 28-year-old Rok Zavbi was deported to his home country a day earlier from the Bologna airport. He had been sentenced to three years and four months in prison.

The news agency said that Zavbi had fought in Syria and that upon his return to Europe he helped recruit new fighters and gave them information about training camps.

Italian media have previously reported that he was one of three suspects convicted in a Venice court for recruiting terrorists, and that the group was linked to Bosnia's top recruiter, Bilal Bosnic, who is serving a seven-year jail sentence in Sarajevo.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Ontario Asks Feds For $200M To Pay For Asylum Seekers

By Antonella Artuso

Toronto (CAN) Sun, July 26, 2018

The PC majority in the Ontario Legislature passed a motion Thursday calling on the Justin Trudeau government to pick up the full tab for "illegal border crossers."

Community Safety Minister Lisa MacLeod has sent an itemized list to the federal government totalling $200 million and counting in welfare, shelter, education, legal aid other related expenses.

"The federal government has not indicated whatsoever that they're willing to pay for any of these costs," MacLeod said.

Mathieu Genest, a spokesperson for federal Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen, said in an email that Ontario has opted not to participate in discussions surrounding asylum seekers so the government will engage directly with municipalities.

"Abiding by Canadian laws to keep Canadians safe and respect our international obligations is not optional, it is a requirement. It is disappointing that the Ontario government has decided to view this as a choice, and is playing politics on this issue by spreading disinformation about a vulnerable group of people," Genest said.

MacLeod said she's willing to meet directly with new Border Security Minister Bill Blair if that's what the federal government prefers.

"Bill Blair has my cellphone number," she said. "We could have that conversation and they can write the cheque."

The federal government is responsible for the bills piling up for two reasons — because it is supposed to control the influx of people through non-legal points of entry and because it has allowed the normal 60-day processing window for asylum claims to stretch to two and three years, MacLeod said.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said it's not illegal for people to seek asylum in Canada, and she lashed out at the Ontario government's use of the term, "illegal border crossers."

"I have to say I'm disgusted, disgusted with the government's motion that's on the order paper today to be debated," she said Thursday.

"Because it only sows the seeds of hate with that hate-filled language… What this government is doing is inciting division and divisiveness and hatred."

MacLeod said she welcomes people of all backgrounds and cultures, and encourages the public to show respect to everyone.

"What we're simply saying here in the province of Ontario is the federal government has created a crisis and they have to pay for it," MacLeod said.

aartuso@postmedia.com

NATIONAL NEWS

Remains Of 55 U.S. War Dead In North Korea Start Journey Home After 65 Years

By Choe Sang-Hun

New York Times, July 27, 2018

PYEONGTAEK, South Korea — Remains believed to be those of 55 American servicemen were flown out of North Korea on Friday, the first visible result of President Trump's efforts to bring the American war dead home 65 years after the end of combat in the Korean War.

"We are encouraged by North Korea's actions and the momentum for positive change," the White House said in announcing the handover.

An American Air Force C-17 Globemaster cargo plane carrying the remains landed later at Osan Air Base south of Seoul, the South Korean capital. Hundreds of American service members as well as a military honor guard lined up on the tarmac to mark the return of the fallen troops.

As the honor guard and the troops stood at attention, 55 small coffins containing the remains were individually carried out of the plane by dress-uniformed soldiers and loaded into six vans. Each of the boxes was wrapped with the United Nations flag, the flag that American troops fought under in the Korean War.

From Osan Air Base, the remains will be transferred to the Hawaii-based Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, where painstaking forensic work will be carried out to identify them. Remains that were returned in the past from North Korea were found to be mixed with those of unidentified individuals and even with animal bones.

After the return of the remains, President Trump thanked Kim Jong-un, North Korea's leader, who less than a year ago was threatening the United States with his "nuclear button."

The Korean War was halted with an armistice signed 65 years ago on Friday. But thousands of American troops killed in major battles in North Korea have not been returned because the war was never formally concluded with a peace treaty, and North Korea and the United States lack diplomatic ties.

The remains flown out on Friday were the first handed over since a joint effort by American military experts and North Korean workers between 1996 and 2005. The group collected the remains of what were believed to have been 220 American soldiers.

But since then the Pentagon's efforts to bring the American war dead home have been overshadowed by tensions over the North's nuclear weapons program.

A breakthrough came when Mr. Trump held a summit meeting with Mr. Kim in Singapore on June 12. Mr. Kim committed to work toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and promised to return the remains of American troops, starting with those already recovered and identified.

Mr. Trump claimed last month that the North Koreans had "already sent back, or are in the process of sending back, the remains of our great heroes." He also boasted that North Korea's nuclear crisis had been "largely solved." But the efforts to denuclearize North Korea and return the American remains have moved slower than Washington had hoped.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, this month to urge North Korea to go forward with Mr. Kim's commitments. North Korea soon accused the United States of making a "unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization," while failing to offer corresponding American incentives to improve ties.

North Korea and the United States have yet to agree on a detailed road map on how to achieve what Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump both identified as their common goal: the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" and the creation of a new bilateral relationship.

Still, during recent talks with American officials on the border between North and South Korea, the North reaffirmed its commitment to return some remains. Its officials also agreed to resume joint United States-North Korean searches at major battle sites in the North to recover more remains.

More than 36,000 American troops died in the Korean War. Of them, some 7,700 remain unaccounted for, including 5,300 believed to have died in the North.

Washington considers the return of the remains an important good-will gesture as it considers improving ties with North Korea should it denuclearize. North Korea has recently started dismantling a missile-engine test site, as Mr. Trump said Mr. Kim promised he would during their summit meeting.

U.S. Military Takes Possession Of Remains That North Korea Says Belong To Americans Who Died In The Korean War

By Adam Taylor And Dan Lamothe

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

A U.S. Air Force plane carrying what are thought to be the remains of 55 Americans killed during the Korean War arrived at Osan Air Base in South Korea on Friday morning, the 65th anniversary of the armistice that ended the fighting.

The U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft departed for the Kalma Airport in the North Korean city of Wonsan before 6 a.m. Friday. It returned about 11 a.m. local time, where it was greeted by a crowd of several thousand U.S. service members and their families — all American service members in South Korea had been invited to the event.

The exchange means that one part of the agreement reached between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore on June 12 has been partially fulfilled — albeit more slowly than many had anticipated.

"Today's actions represent a significant first step to recommence the repatriation of remains from North Korea and to resume field operations in North Korea to search for the estimated 5,300 Americans who have not yet returned home," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement Thursday night.

The remains are expected to remain at Osan for a few days for initial testing before a repatriation ceremony is held on Aug. 1 and they are sent on to Hawaii.

Yonhap News Agency reported Thursday that North Korea has accepted 100 wooden transit caskets that it plans to use to return the remains. The U.S. military command in South Korea moved the caskets into the demilitarized zone that splits the Korean Peninsula in late June.

Earlier Thursday, the expected recovery was greeted with cautious optimism by Rick Downes, executive director of a group of families whose loved ones never came home from the Korean War. They have watched discussions in recent weeks with a mixture of hope and cynicism, he said.

"These are poker chips, unfortunately," said Downes, who runs the Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs. "These guys, these missing men, are still serving. The war still goes on, and they are being negotiated and used as a bargaining tool."

A U.S. official told The Washington Post last week that North Korea has agreed to hand over about 55 sets of remains. Friday was suggested as a likely date for the repatriation because of its symbolic importance as the anniversary of the armistice, but the official cautioned that the date could change and that the number of remains would need to be checked after they are handed over.

Former New Mexico governor Bill Richardson, who has worked on repatriation issues and visited North Korea several times, said Thursday that he sees the potential recovery as a positive first step. But he warned that Pyongyang could stall in delivering other remains and attempt to use the issue as a way to make money.

"They'll give a certain amount of remains for free right away," Richardson predicted. "But then they'll say, 'The next ones, we need to find them, locate them, restore them.' And then they'll start charging, and they'll milk this."

Though the United States has a policy of refusing to pay for the repatriation of remains, in the past, it has agreed to provide some funding for expenses incurred by the North Koreans.

The Pentagon estimates that nearly 7,700 U.S. troops are unaccounted for from the war; among them are 5,300 believed to have been killed north of the 38th parallel, which

largely coincides with the boundary between North and South Korea.

The North Korean government is believed to have somewhere between 120 and 200 sets of U.S. military remains in its possession and ready to deliver, but there are thousands more still in the North Korean countryside, said Mickey Bergman, vice president of the Richardson Center for Global Engagement that the former governor founded.

Some remains were buried by U.S. troops in cemeteries that were intended to be temporary until China's entry in the Korean War forced U.S. forces to withdraw farther south. Other remains are at sites where aircraft crashed or in unmarked graves, Bergman said.

"One of the things that is so important is for the American people to understand that this is just the beginning," he said. "This is going to take years. It's going to take interviews and sight surveys and teams on the ground. My fear is that we will get these remains and once again say 'Mission accomplished!' And it's not."

After the remains are returned, scientific testing will be needed to confirm that they belong to American soldiers from the Korean War. In the past, North Korea has been accused of deliberately including non-American bones — even animal bones — in a bid to fool U.S. authorities.

The remains will be sent to Hawaii, where the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency runs a laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. The identification process there could take years, U.S. officials have said. It often includes a review of archival information that determines where certain U.S. troops were likely to have disappeared or been buried.

After the historic summit between the two leaders last month, Trump and Kim agreed to work together to recover U.S. remains left in North Korea and to implement the "immediate repatriation of those already identified."

Only a few days after meeting Kim, Trump portrayed the return of the remains as something that had already happened. "We got back our great fallen heroes, the remains," he told a campaign rally in Minnesota. "In fact, today, already 200 have been sent back."

However, while the U.S. military had moved caskets into the Korean Peninsula's joint security area in anticipation, no remains had been sent back. Soon, negotiations were dragging out longer than many had expected.

"That it took this long to secure such low-hanging fruit is a bad sign that North Korea intends to lean on its traditional negotiating posture," Van Jackson, a former Pentagon official who teaches at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, said of the prospective repatriation.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was expected to return with remains when he visited Pyongyang for an overnight stay July 6. But after his team was criticized by the North Korean Foreign Ministry, his visit only highlighted tensions between the United States and North Korea over the return of the remains and issues surrounding denuclearization.

On July 12, North Korean military officials left their U.S. counterparts waiting for hours at the joint security area before belatedly calling to request that they reschedule their prearranged meeting. Only after this meeting and subsequent ones was practical progress made.

One part of the holdup appeared to be North Korean requests for payment.

The last time North Korea's military returned likely remains of American troops was in 2005 amid escalating tensions with Pyongyang, when the United States halted a program that had been running since the 1990s.

In 2007, Richardson visited North Korea on a private mission that had the approval of the Bush administration. Richardson returned with the remains of six service members.

The return of the remains now would come after commercial satellite imagery appeared to show that North Korea had destroyed part of a satellite-testing facility that was part of the country's missile-development program. Trump, who told reporters in June that North Korea had agreed to destroy that facility, said Tuesday that the United States appreciated the move.

Plane Said To Carry War Remains From North Korea Lands At U.S. Base

By Associated Press

Politico, July 26, 2018

A U.S. military plane has returned from North Korea and landed at Osan Air Base in South Korea after reportedly picking up the remains of what are believed to be U.S. servicemen killed during the Korean War.

An Associated Press journalist at the base outside the capital Seoul saw the plane land Friday local time.

Earlier, the White House said North Korea has turned over the potential remains of American service members who have been missing since the Korean war, following through on a promise made last month to President Donald Trump.

The White House said that a U.S. Air Force plane containing remains of fallen service members had departed Wonsan, North Korea, and was en route to Osan Air Base in South Korea.

The transfer of remains represents one of the first tangible results of Trump's June 12 summit meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. It sets off a lengthy series of forensic examinations and tests to determine if the remains are human, and whether they are actually American or allied troops killed in the conflict.

Details were still sketchy but reports said that Pyongyang would return about 55 sets of remains from the 1950-53 Korean War, a step meant to fulfill a commitment

made by leader Kim Jong Un during his summit with President Donald Trump in June.

About 7,700 U.S. soldiers are listed as missing from the Korean War, and 5,300 of the remains are believed to still be in North Korea. The war killed millions, including 36,000 American soldiers.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

First U.S. Troop Remains From North Korea Headed Home, White House Confirms

By Ben Wolfgang

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

U.S. aircraft on Thursday night flew to North Korea to begin retrieving the remains of American troops killed during the Korean war, the White House announced.

American planes retrieved the remains from Wonsan, North Korea, and will return them to Osan Air Base in South Korea. A formal repatriation ceremony will be held on August 1, the Trump administration said.

The White House cast the move as a significant step forward in U.S.-North Korean relations following last month's historic summit between President Trump and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un.

"At their historic meeting in Singapore, President Donald J. Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un took a bold first step to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, transform relations between the United States and North Korea, and establish enduring peace," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement. "Today, the Chairman is fulfilling part of the commitment he made to the President to return our fallen American service members. We are encouraged by North Korea's actions and the momentum for positive change."

The move was first reported by South Korea-based Yonhap news agency.

It's unclear how many remains are being transported out of North Korea; the White House said an estimated 5,300 Americans have not yet been brought home.

"The United States owes a profound debt of gratitude to those American service members who gave their lives in service to their country and we are working diligently to bring them home," Ms. Sanders said. "It is a solemn obligation of the United States government to ensure that the remains are handled with dignity and properly accounted for so their families receive them in an honorable manner."

Earlier this week, Mr. Trump said the process of returning the remains was under way.

"As you may know, we're also working to bring back the remains of your brothers-in-arms who gave their lives in Korea. And I hope that, very soon, these fallen warriors will begin coming home to lay at rest in American soil. That's starting the process," the president said during a speech to a VFW convention in Kansas City.

Following the repatriation ceremony in South Korea, the remains are expected to transported to Hawaii for forensic identification, the Yonhap News Agency reported.

US Headed To North Korea To Bring Back Remains Of American Soldiers

By Anna Giaritelli

Washington Examiner, July 26, 2018

An American transport aircraft departed for North Korea Friday on a mission to pick up the remains of U.S. troops killed during the Korean War, according to a South Korean state news agency.

The plane left Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, shortly before 6 a.m. local time Friday and flew into Kalma Airport in Wonsan, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The operation was approved by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during his meeting in Singapore with President Trump last month.

Friday is the 65th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended armed fighting in the Korean War and which may be followed by a peace treaty later this year. Approximately 50 soldiers' remains from the 1950s war will be repatriated to the U.S.

Once the remains have been transported back to South Korea, they will be flown to the Defense Prisoners of War / Missing in Action Accounting Agency for inspection. They are also expected to undergo forensic testing in Hawaii.

Aircraft Carrying Remains Of US Korean War Dead Departs N. Korea: WH

By Afp

Breitbart, July 26, 2018

A US military aircraft carrying the remains of service members killed during the Korean War left North Korea late Wednesday, the White House said.

The remains, which Pyongyang agreed to return after Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump's historic June summit, were being transferred to the United States's Osan Air Base in South Korea.

"A U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft containing remains of fallen service members has departed Wonsan, North Korea," the White House said in a statement.

"Today's actions represent a significant first step to recommence the repatriation of remains from North Korea and to resume field operations in North Korea to search for the estimated 5,300 Americans who have not yet returned home."

US Warns Of North Korea's Global Outsourcing Of Forced Labor

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

American companies were put on notice this week by the Trump administration that they could face steep fines, or even criminal charges, if their business involves North Korean workers anywhere in their supply chain.

A State Department advisory, published online, also provided the most detailed and comprehensive public listing to date of more than 40 countries and about a dozen industries where North Koreans were employed in 2017 and 2018, in violation of United Nations sanctions. The workers are typically paid a fraction of their salaries, while the rest, as much as 70 percent, is taken by North Korea's government.

"Dangers can be lurking in global supply chains," said Anthony Talbott, who heads the University of Dayton's Human Rights Center. "North Korea is the most brutal, anti-Christian regime in the world. The only reason an American corporation would be contracting with companies using their laborers would be because their prices are significantly lower."

North Korean workers abroad typically work 16- to 20-hour shifts with only a few days off each month, said the State Department, which describes the system as a type of human trafficking. Their pay supports North Korea's programs of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, the advisory said.

"Businesses should be aware of North Korea's deceptive practices in order to ... ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements across their entire supply chains," the State Department said in a statement Wednesday.

The advisory also names more than 230 North Korean companies that have joint ventures with partners from China and other countries. The companies produce a variety of items, including apparel, small electronics and minerals. American manufacturers, which import about 10 percent of their supply chains, could face legal repercussions if they bought materials produced by those joint ventures.

The National Association of Manufacturers declined to comment.

Last year, an Associated Press investigation documented North Korean women in Chinese factories processing seafood that ends up in American supermarkets.

The North Korean laborers often covet the jobs, which range from construction in Algeria, Kuwait and Malaysia to positions in medical clinics in Cambodia, China and Nigeria. The North Korean government receives hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign currency from their labor, as much as a tenth of its economy, experts say.

"The crackdown on wages is the one of the final and deepest-dive measures to cut off all foreign cash and finances coming into the DPRK," said George Lopez, who served on the United Nations panel of experts for monitoring sanctions on North Korea.

But he said the advisory was "more bark than bite" because it's very hard to identify and impose the restrictions.

Enforcement in the U.S. falls to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when it comes to blocking imports produced by North Korean laborers. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would be responsible for criminal charges, and the Treasury Department can issue fines if sanctions are violated.

But those agencies rarely bring cases.

Professor Joseph DeThomas, at Penn State's school of international affairs, said the long list of countries is discouraging because the United Nations last year banned countries from allowing outsourced North Korean workers.

"This is a significant hole in sanctions," he said.

Ray Kuo, an assistant professor of political science at Fordham University, said fines against companies won't have much impact unless China and Russia, where most North Koreans are employed, comply.

And he said some in China, Russia and South Korea are pointing to a Singapore summit between leaders of the US and North Korea as justification for relaxing sanctions.

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, a New Jersey Republican who has been a leading sponsor of legislation to end human trafficking, said the State Department is sending a strong message about the ongoing fight against human trafficking, "both a human rights atrocity and a source of foreign currency for the Kim Jong Un regime."

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

The Big Lesson From Trump's Truce On Trade? Pushback Works.

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

Here is the lesson of President Trump's sudden decision Wednesday to call a truce in his trade war with the European Union: Pushback works.

As recently as Tuesday, Mr. Trump seemed committed to escalating the tariff war he started with Europe on June 1 by implementing steel and aluminum tariffs on that 28-nation confederation. The E.U. retaliated on June 22 with levies on iconic U.S. goods such as bourbon and Harley-Davidson motorcycles — and Mr. Trump raised the ante by threatening a 25 percent tariff on European auto imports. All the while, he pursued tariffs against other trading partners such as Canada, China and Mexico, which were striking back against U.S. agricultural and industrial goods produced in heartland states where Republican senators and members of Congress face difficult midterm elections. It did not help Mr. Trump's

cause that U.S.-based auto manufacturers who would purportedly benefit from tariff protection did not want it — and said so loud and clear. The administration's proposal to hand farm country a $12 billion trade-war bailout also fell flat, with Republican senators chorusing their opposition.

With U.S. industry, U.S. agriculture, long-standing European trading partners and members of his own party all telling Mr. Trump to cool it, he did something he rarely does — listen. The "deal" the president trumpeted on Wednesday in the company of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker was his face-saving off-ramp. It amounts to little more than a mutual promise to talk about reducing trade barriers on both sides of the Atlantic, and to impose no new ones in the meantime. Tariffs on industrial goods other than autos would be targeted for elimination. Europe embellished it with a pledge to buy more American soybeans, thus offsetting China's tariffs on that product, and to import more U.S. natural gas in the distant future. Considering that the negotiating agenda Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker sketched resembles the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership that President Barack Obama tried to launch with Europe, you could almost say that all Mr. Trump has to show for his trade war with the European "foe" is a return to his predecessor's policy, plus some beans.

Still, this is a positive development, because a negotiated mutual opening of markets would benefit the U.S. economy, if indeed Mr. Trump's team can make it happen; because it avoids a worsening of global tensions; and, last but not least, because Mr. Trump did, however reluctantly, resist his worst instincts. We hope that some of the new pragmatism infuses talks on salvaging the free-trade agreement with Canada and Mexico.

Caveats apply: On May 20, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin put a trade war with China "on hold," only to have the president resume it less than two weeks later. The same thing could happen with Europe. Also, before his deal with the E.U., Mr. Trump badly and possibly lastingly damaged international trade norms, especially by putting "national security" in play as a rationale for ordinary protectionism. This points to the lingering structural problem in U.S. trade policy: Congress's delegation of too much easily abused tariff-raising power to the president. Republican pushback will really have meaning when it produces legislation to take away some of the president's discretion in such matters.

Trump's Trade Truce With Europe Has A Familiar Feel: It Mirrors Obama's Path

By Ana Swanson And Jack Ewing

New York Times, July 26, 2018

When President Trump called a truce with the European Union over trade, the general outlines of his plan sounded familiar. It echoed of earlier negotiations — the ones started under President Barack Obama and shelved by Mr. Trump last year.

Mr. Trump, in many ways, is taking credit for solving a crisis of his own making. After taking office, he criticized the deals of his predecessor and cut off trade talks with the European Union. He raised the stakes by imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum, prompting retaliatory measures by the European Union. Then he stoked the tensions by calling Europe a "foe."

Now, Mr. Trump, in hashing out an agreement on Wednesday with president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, is declaring victory. He said the two sides would work to lower tariffs and other trade barriers. They would reduce bureaucratic roadblocks to industrial goods flowing across the Atlantic, while ending conflicting regulations for drugs and chemicals.

The United States was pursuing much the same under Mr. Obama through a deal called the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. And the collapse of the deal still smarts for large segments of American and European business who had fervently hoped to create a trans-Atlantic version of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The European Union has repeatedly told the Trump administration that it would be happy to revive trade talks.

"Most of the deal is stuff we were already on the verge of agreeing on in the T.T.I.P. negotiations, before that deal got deep-sixed after Trump's election," said Rufus Yerxa, the president of the National Foreign Trade Council, which represents exporters. "But at least the President is talking about more open trade instead of how great tariffs are."

Both European and American officials resisted comparisons to previous negotiations. But it was not immediately clear what would set the new talks apart from those carried out by the Obama administration, beyond their more limited scope. Unlike with the previous round of negotiations, European officials said that the agricultural sector would be excluded from a deal with the Trump administration.

Speaking from Air Force One on Thursday, the commerce secretary, Wilbur Ross, called the European Union's willingness to negotiate a "real vindication of the president's trade policy."

"If we hadn't had steel and aluminum tariffs, we never would have gotten to the point we are now," Mr. Ross said.

"The major progress today is that our American friends agreed not to increase tariffs on cars and other products during the negotiation, which is a major concession by the Americans, I have to say," Mr. Juncker told reporters after the meeting in Washington.

Mr. Trump's aggressive posture has helped him gain leverage on the trade front with countries like China. But his confrontational approach has also strained relations with vital allies like the European Union.

It is possible that Mr. Trump has changed the political calculus for Europeans. They are frightened by the prospect of escalating tariffs with their largest trading partner.

Penalties on foreign cars and auto parts were especially worrisome for Europe, where the industry is a big economic driver. Mr. Trump will postpone imposing them to see how the negotiations progress.

"The Europeans have to ask themselves, 'Do we want a trade war or a trade pact?'" said Gabriel Felbermayr, director of the ifo Center for International Economics in Munich. "Before it was a choice between a pact and the status quo."

Among European business leaders, there was cautious optimism that the meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker could signal a return to the cooperative relationship that once prevailed between Europe and the United States.

"We would see this as a step in the right direction," said Susan Danger, chief executive of the American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union in Brussels. "Work on these areas first, build up trust, and then we work on progress toward other areas."

Whether the announcement turns into a signed trade deal is not exactly assured.

Europeans continue to question whether a president with an expressed fondness for tariffs is negotiating in good faith. Diplomats, officials and analysts in Europe worry that Mr. Trump could easily pivot back to the hostility he showed toward European leaders at the G7 summit meeting in Canada in June or the NATO summit meeting in Brussels this month.

"It buys time. Potentially it could be more," Jörg Krämer, chief economist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt, said of the agreement between Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker. But Mr. Krämer added, "Trump is a protectionist, and we can't rule out this was just a tactical move."

Other portions of the plan lack detail or sound unrealistic. Although Mr. Trump said the European Union had promised to purchase more natural gas and soybeans, the market there is dominated by private companies. And the various national governments in the 28-member bloc may have a tough time influencing their purchases.

Mario Draghi, the president of the European Central Bank, was not ready to sound the all clear. He said Thursday that broad trade tensions remained a risk to the world economy.

"Uncertainties related to global factors, notably the threat of protectionism, remain prominent," he said at a news conference in Frankfurt.

The trade talks did not go smoothly under Mr. Obama, either.

Europe and the United States started their trade talks in 2013 in an effort to cut regulations as well as expand trade and investment. But the talks dragged on over divisions over pharmaceuticals, consumer safety and investment rules.

In Europe, the deal ran into resistance from critics who complained that the negotiations were held largely in secret. A big worry was that companies would exploit a trade pact to water down regulations on the environment and food safety.

Germans were among the most strident opponents of a trans-Atlantic trade deal, even though the country's auto industry was strongly in favor of removing tariffs. In 2016, thousands of people marched in Berlin to protest the proposed deal.

When Mr. Trump was elected, the negotiations fell apart.

One of the most toxic parts of the prior deal, an investment court that allows businesses to sue governments for unfair treatment, would likely not be part of future talks. Mr. Trump's advisers have criticized these courts and insisted on removing them from Nafta.

Opposition groups signaled on Thursday that they would keep a close eye on what emerges from this new attempt to dismantle trade barriers.

"Any trade talks between the world's two biggest economies must not start a race to the bottom, jeopardizing hard-won protections for labor rights, public health, sustainable agriculture and the environment," Shira Stanton, a trade policy strategist for Greenpeace, said in an emailed statement. "If the E.U. and U.S. try again to water down essential safeguards behind closed doors, they should expect the same public opposition."

Then there are the practical hurdles to negotiating a trade pact, a process that typically takes years.

To abide by World Trade Organization rules, any future pact would have to cover nearly all trade between the United States and the European Union, which makes it hard to exclude many sectors. Although Europeans have said agriculture will not be included in the talks, many other industries, from manufacturing to services, may fight back against efforts to slash the tariffs and regulations that protect them.

There may be ways to finesse those rules, which the Europeans are anxious not to openly flout. When Japan and the European Union signed a trade pact earlier this month, they phased in some provisions over 15 years to blunt the impact.

"If they want to do it, they can," said Mr. Felbermayr. "A trade war would be a lot worse than a free trade deal, and no one is going to object."

J

In Tentative Deal With E.U., Trump Touts Parts Of Global Trade Deals He Once Rejected

By Jeanne Whalen And Damian Paletta

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

President Trump this week embraced components of global trade deals he has rejected in the past, in a preliminary agreement with the European Union, American and European trade experts and diplomats said Thursday.

Speaking to a crowd of steelworkers Thursday in Granite City, Ill., Trump touted a "historic agreement" with the European Union and said his administration's tough trade strategy is working and making up for unfair trade deals in the past. "This is the time to straighten out the worst trade deals ever made by any country on Earth ever in history," he said.

But the deals the administration has reached fall short of Trump's broad aim of rebalancing U.S. trade relations with the rest of the world — and in some instances adopt elements of past agreements the president is intent on breaking.

Trump's agreement this week with the European Union and a renegotiation earlier this year of a trade deal with South Korea bear similarities to deals that were in place or being negotiated before Trump took office, the analysts and diplomats said.

A key piece of the agreement Trump reached with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to ease escalating trade tensions and forestall further tariffs called for both sides to "work together toward zero tariffs" on non-auto industrial goods, such as aircraft engines and turbines.

That was also a goal of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, a proposed deal that the United States and the European Union were negotiating under the Obama administration and that subsequently withered.

"There does seem to be a lot of similarity in what Trump wants to achieve and what the TTIP tried to accomplish," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

Wednesday's joint statement from Juncker and Trump also called for easing trade barriers in sectors such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals, aims that were part of the TTIP, said Anthony Gardner, who was U.S. ambassador to the European Union during the Obama administration.

The Trump administration's reworking of a trade deal with South Korea included some improvements for Washington, including a Korean agreement to restrict its steel exports to the United States, trade experts said.

But Jeff Moon, who was assistant U.S. trade representative to China during the Obama administration, said the new deal was largely similar to the previous one "because it wasn't that bad a deal."

During his hour-long speech at a U.S. Steel facility in Granite City, Trump gave a provocative, forceful defense of his approach to economic and foreign policy, arguing that his hardball tactics had worked with China, the European Union and North Korea.

It is a message the White House is trying to reinforce after many business leaders and Republicans in recent days expressed concern that Trump's trade agenda was starting to backfire.

Midway through the corporate earnings season, some of the country's largest companies have reported that they are feeling the pinch of the Trump administration's trade war.

The executives, who lead companies across a broad array of industries, identified the tariffs — especially on aluminum and steel — as a potential drag on profits.

They said the import taxes could lead to higher prices for consumers and force companies to make major changes in production lines, including moving some operations out of China.

General Motors, Coca-Cola, Harley-Davidson and Brown-Forman have all warned that the tariffs could push them to increase prices.

Republicans also have raised concerns about Trump's trade strategy.

Rep. Garland "Andy" Barr (R-Ky.) said that although he is pleased with the E.U. agreement, he is concerned about the effects of the trade tensions on the bourbon industry and on car plants in his state.

"We appreciate the administration lowering the temperature with the E.U., but to my question about retaliatory tariffs on Kentucky bourbon exports, I don't have a solution yet for my bourbon industry," Barr said.

"I also stressed that there are a lot more jobs at Toyota Motor Manufacturing in Kentucky that are negatively impacted by these steel tariffs than there are at the aluminum smelters and the steel production facilities in Kentucky," he added.

Trump said that U.S. policy before he became president was "stupid" and that the economy during the Obama administration was "going to hell." At one point, he said countries used to look at the country as the "big, fat, sloppy United States."

The rosy picture Trump painted of his agenda was only a partial reflection of where things stand. He characterized the E.U. negotiations, which began in earnest Wednesday, as nearly completed, but many differences remain. And relations with China are still chilly and uncertain amid an escalation of tariffs.

In a room full of steelworkers in a revived steel town, those nuances weren't as important as the momentum Trump said he was fueling. U.S. Steel executives and employees are strong supporters of the tariffs Trump imposed on steel and aluminum imports this year.

Bob Edwards, 60, was rehired by the Granite City steel plant in January 2017 after having lost his job 11 months earlier.

"A regular paycheck and a booming economy — when you are doing something, you are not worried about

everything else," said Edwards, whose ponytail was tucked under his orange hard hat. He said he's a strong union supporter and also a strong Trump supporter.

U.S. Steel's chief executive addressed the crowd of about 500 in the sweltering warehouse before Trump arrived, encouraging them to keep working together to help the company continue its growth. U.S. Steel's stock price has roughly doubled since Trump's election.

"We have a president who believes in you," David B. Burritt said. "He's fighting for us."

Speaking before the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday, U.S. Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer said negotiations to overhaul the North American Free Trade Agreement were proceeding at "an unprecedented speed."

Lighthizer, who also met Thursday with Ildefonso Guajardo Villarreal, Mexico's economic secretary, to discuss NAFTA negotiations, said he hoped to have an agreement in principle with Mexico soon.

"My hope is that we will before very long have a conclusion with respect to Mexico, and as a result of that, Canada will come in and begin to compromise. I don't believe they've compromised in the same way the United States has or the way Mexico has," he said. Canadian officials didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Luis de la Calle, a former undersecretary in Mexico's economic ministry, said the United States and Mexico have incentives to conclude the NAFTA talks soon.

"On the Mexican side, there is the incentive of the outgoing government to conclude that issue, and for the incoming government, to not have to deal with it," he said, referring to the presidential administration set to take office in December.

'Basically, We Opened Up Europe,' Trump Says — Despite No Final Trade Deal

By Jordan Fabian

The Hill, July 26, 2018

President Trump on Thursday took a victory lap over his handshake agreement to avoid a trade war with the European Union, declaring "basically, we opened up Europe" to U.S. exports — even though no new deal is in place.

"We just opened up Europe for you farmers. You're not going to be too angry with Trump, I can tell you," Trump said at a jobs event in Peosta, Iowa.

Referring to the agreement struck Wednesday with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, Trump said, "you have just gotten yourself one big market."

As he spoke, Trump held up a green and yellow baseball cap with the phrase "Make Our Farmers Great Again!" emblazoned on the front.

The president is trying to assuage the fears of farmers who are worried about financial pain caused by the prospect of an escalating trade with with Europe and China, but he spoke as if discussing a finalized bargain.

Trump agreed to put off auto tariffs on Europe and the two leaders said they would begin broader talks over lowering other trade barriers.

The deal was otherwise vague and no tariffs have yet been lifted. The upcoming negotiations between the U.S. and Europe are not guaranteed to produce an agreement that significantly reduces trade barriers.

The U.S. also remains embroiled in a trade dispute with China, which has imposed retaliatory tariffs on corn and soybean producers that are raising fears in heartland states like Iowa.

The economic pressure on U.S. farmers could pose a political risk to the Republican Party in the November midterm elections, since many farmers live in states Trump won in 2016.

On Tuesday, the Department of Agriculture announced a plan to give $12 billion in aid to U.S. farmers hit by retaliatory international tariffs on American produce, grain and meat exports.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue called the assistance plan "a short-term solution to allow President Trump time to work on long-term trade deals to benefit agriculture and the entire U.S. economy."

Republicans and Democrats both dismissed the idea as "welfare" for farms, calling on Trump to remove his original tariffs.

"They put in place a policy that requires our farmers to go on welfare and, you know, it's a ridiculous policy that just needs to be reversed," said Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.).

Trump Misleads Iowa Audience On Agriculture Deal

By Jonathan Swan, Marisa Fernandez

Axios, July 26, 2018

Trump misleads Iowa audience on agriculture deal

President Trump misled a roundtable at an Iowa community college today, telling them "we just opened up Europe for you farmers," when in reality his Wednesday deal with the European Union doesn't come close to fulfilling such an extraordinary claim.

Why it matters: Aside from the EU agreeing to purchase more soybeans, agriculture is not covered by yesterday's deal. The EU insisted farm goods be excluded so only "non-auto industrial goods" are part of the negotiation towards zero tariffs and zero subsidies.

Here's what Trump told the Iowa audience today:

"...[W]e just opened up Europe for you farmers, you're not going to be too angry with Trump, I can tell you because

... they were restricted from dealing, you had barriers that really made it impossible for farm products to go in."

Trump-Europe Trade Rift: What Was Settled, And What Wasn't?

By Paul Wiseman

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — To the relief of many, the United States and Europe have agreed to avert a trade war over autos and to work toward removing other barriers to trade.

Yet the truce reached Wednesday by President Donald Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker after a White House meeting produced few details and no commitments. And it didn't begin to address other Trump-led trade conflicts, notably with China, that have already hurt many U.S. companies.

Still, the news that the United States was at least temporarily holding off on taxing imported cars, trucks and auto parts from the European Union calmed fears on both sides of the Atlantic. The easing of tensions was warmly embraced after a drumbeat of intensely belligerent rhetoric from both sides.

"It's not clear at this point where all this is going and how long it will last," Simon Lester, a trade specialist at the Cato Institute, wrote on the libertarian think tank's blog Thursday. "But one day of trade peace is nice after months of harsh rhetoric and escalating tariffs."

Here's a look at what Trump-Juncker meeting achieved — and what it didn't.

___

WHAT DID TRUMP AND JUNCKER AGREE TO?

Most important, they agreed to suspend a looming trade war over autos. Trump has threatened 20 percent to 25 percent tariffs on imported vehicles and auto parts, which he has labeled a threat to America's national security. The EU has been readying retaliatory taxes on U.S. products. Now, those tariffs are on hold as long as the U.S. and EU keep talking in good faith.

Trump had faced a backlash against his threatened auto tariffs on Capitol Hill, especially from lawmakers whose constituents would stand to suffer. Sens. Doug Jones, D-Ala., and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., introduced legislation that would delay the tariffs by requiring the independent International Trade Commission to first conduct a study of the auto industry.

The U.S. and EU also agreed to start talks intended to achieve "zero tariffs" and "zero subsidies" on non-automotive industrial goods. And the EU agreed to buy more U.S. soybeans and to build more terminals to import liquefied natural gas from the United States.

The two sides said they would seek to resolve a dispute over steel and aluminum. The U.S. has imposed tariffs on the metals, again justifying the action on national-security grounds. These tariffs — effectively a tax on imports — have hurt many American manufacturers that require imported steel and aluminum to build cars, boats, machines and many other goods. The EU has counterpunched with tariffs on U.S. products.

Wednesday's meeting raised at least the prospect that those tit-for-tat tariffs would be lifted. But it's hardly assured. No firm dates were set for future talks on the U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs. And Trump, who has frequently changed course for little apparent reason, could always decide that the tariffs should remain in effect after all.

___

IS THE AGREEMENT GETTING GOOD REVIEWS?

Most analysts were relieved that the U.S. and EU had pulled back from the brink of automotive tariffs. But most were also underwhelmed by the lack of detail or formal commitments.

If history is a guide, the U.S.-EU talks on freer trade could stall as the union's 28 member states register objections to specific market-opening proposals and U.S. companies start raising demands on the negotiators.

"These things become Christmas trees with everybody hanging things on them," said Philip Levy, a senior fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former White House trade adviser. Levy cautioned that it would be "wildly unrealistic" to expect a big breakthrough on U.S.-EU trade.

It's also possible that the mercurial Trump could grow impatient with progress and hit Europe with auto tariffs after all. In May, analysts recall, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced a cease-fire in a trade war with China after Beijing — like the EU on Wednesday — had agreed to buy more U.S. soybeans and liquefied natural gas. The truce lasted just days. In the end, Trump, retreating in the face of criticism that he had gone soft on China, declared the hostilities back on again.

Moreover, even before Wednesday's agreement, the EU was likely to buy more U.S. soybeans. That's because China, by far the largest market for the crop, has imposed retaliatory tariffs on U.S. soybeans, causing sales to shrink. So the Chinese are buying up all the Brazilian and Argentinian soybeans they can in the interim, leading to expectations that the EU would buy more from the U.S. Still, the EU's purchases won't come close to making up for Beijing's cutback in purchases of U.S. soybeans.

___

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE OTHER DISPUTES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ITS TRADING PARTNERS?

The Trump-Juncker rapprochement did nothing to resolve America's conflicts with the rest of the world. Other trading partners — including Canada, Japan, Mexico and

South Korea — still face the threat of auto tariffs, which could land as early as September. The reverberations would be enormous: The EU accounted for just 22 percent of U.S. auto imports last year; Canada and Mexico combined for 47 percent.

The U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs remain in place. And the United States is still locked in trade war with China. The Trump administration has imposed tariffs on $34 billion in Chinese goods in a dispute over Beijing's high-tech industrial policies and has threatened to eventually target $500 billion. China has struck back with duties on soybeans and pork, among other products, affecting Midwest farmers in a region that supported Trump in his 2016 campaign.

On Wednesday, Trump and Juncker raised the prospect of presenting a united front to China — demanding that Beijing curb overproduction, reduce subsidies for Chinese companies and act to protect foreign intellectual property.

"If the West is not nipping at each other, they can turn toward China," said Timothy Keeler, a lawyer and former chief of staff for the U.S. Trade Representative.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Live: President Trump In Iowa And Illinois

By Meg Wagner And Veronica Rocha

CNN, July 26, 2018

President Trump said on Thursday he enjoys a "very good relationship" with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, suggesting there is already evidence of improved ties.

He also said in his meeting with President Obama at the end of 2016, he got the sense that Obama was ready to go to war with North Korea."We have established really a very good relationship," Trump said. "At the beginning, the news was saying 'what he is saying is going to cause war. He's being horrible. He's totally unhinged,' when I use terms like 'little rocket man,' other terms. But honestly, now I have a great relationship, I think, with Chairman Kim."

He continued: "Without the rhetoric and without the sanctions and the other things that we've been doing, now they're dismantling nuclear areas. They've already blown up nuclear areas. They took down the propaganda that was all over North Korea, signs, music, all of this stuff taken down. It's gone."

Trump also compared the camera presence at his event, held in a steel mill, to the Oscars.

"Look at the cameras back there. It's like the Academy Awards," Trump said. "No difference. One of the advantages that I can say is covered live, much of it and when I say it, they can't do anything about it."

Trump Says Europe Will Buy More American Gas. Is That Possible?

By Stanley Reed

New York Times, July 26, 2018

When President Trump met with Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, at the White House, the two said they were entering a new phase in their relationship. Crucial to that will be natural gas.

Demand for natural gas — a cleaner-burning fossil fuel than coal or oil — is rising worldwide, and the United States is a growing supplier of liquefied natural gas, or L.N.G. The European Union, meanwhile, wants to diversify its energy supply, which remains somewhat dependent on Russia, with which it has a difficult relationship.

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday that the 28-nation European Union would be "a massive buyer of L.N.G.," before adding, "We have plenty of it."

Any such shift won't happen overnight, though.

In simple terms: Europe's consumption of natural gas is increasing, and its domestic production is falling. Its imports have risen rapidly in recent years, and will most likely increase further in the future.

"The question is: Where will these increased imports come from?" said Marco Alverà, chief executive of SNAM, an Italian natural gas infrastructure company.

Many of the region's power plants are switching from being fired by coal, which has high levels of carbon emissions, to running on gas, which is significantly better for the environment (though not entirely clean).

But gas production in Europe is declining. One major reason is that the Dutch government ordered a sharp reduction of output at the enormous Groningen field, because of earthquakes caused by exploration there.

And some other sources may be near maximum capacity. Pipeline gas, the main source of Europe's gas imports, might have peaked, especially from sources like North Africa, analysts say.

L.N.G., a chilled form of natural gas sold by the United States that can be transported on ships to any place with a specific type of terminal, offers another option. Europe already has several such terminals in place — in fact, it is using less than half their available capacity.

To start, just having the possibility of importing large amounts of L.N.G. from the United States, or indeed elsewhere, eases the risk that Russia could apply a gas chokehold on Europe. (Germany, for example, imports around half of its natural gas from Russia.) Poland and Lithuania, which are especially wary of Moscow, have recently built L.N.G. receiving terminals for this reason.

Still, Europe's dependence on Russia is driven largely by one factor — Russian gas is cheap.

European gas prices are now largely determined by trading on financial markets, but they are often too low for American suppliers to compete. The cost of liquefying gas in the United States and transporting it to Europe doubles its price for American companies. So if they were to sell to customers in Europe at current prices, they would lose money.

By contrast, Russian gas sent by pipeline to Germany costs far less, allowing Russian companies to make large profits, according to Jonathan Stern, founder of the natural gas program at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

There is also another benefit: Buying more gas from the United States could give Mr. Trump a reason to hold off on imposing costly tariffs on auto imports. Giles Farrer, an analyst at the energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie, points out that the president has tried to use gas to improve the United States' trade balance in talks with Europe and China.

Cost is a major factor.

Europe has pushed hard in the past two decades to create a freely traded market for natural gas, according to Mr. Alverà of SNAM. The region has, in essence, bet that a functioning market is the best route to easing dependence on any one source.

While American gas exports have grown rapidly, most shipments have gone to Asia and Latin America, where prices have been higher. Price differences mean American gas is usually attractive to European buyers only during cold snaps, when prices on the Continent rise. If a glut of L.N.G. emerges in the future, more of that gas from the United States may wind up in Europe, but that could mean American suppliers lose money, Mr. Stern said.

The United States became a natural gas exporter only recently, as large quantities of the fuel have become available from shale drilling. As a result, the country has yet to construct the export terminals necessary to sell its gas to customers further afield. The United States is expected to add substantially to this export capacity in the next few years, though.

"It makes a lot of sense for U.S. L.N.G. to fill the gap," said Oswald Clint, an analyst at Bernstein Research.

Larry Kudlow: E.U. Now Backs Trump's Trade Fight With China

By S.A. Miller

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

President Trump's chief economic adviser said Thursday that European Union Commission President Jean Claude Juncker pledged to back the U.S. trade fight against China.

The commitment to take on China's trade abuses was made as part of the breakthrough zero-tariff deal struck this week by Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker, said Larry Kudlow, director of the president's National Economic Council.

"The United States and the E.U. will be allies in the fight against China, which has broken the world trading system," Mr. Kudlow said on Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co."

He said that China attempted to enlist the E.U. to oppose Mr. Trump's get-tough trade policies but Mr. Juncker refused.

"Juncker made it very clear yesterday that he intended to help us [and] President Trump on the China problem," he said.

The agreement to negotiate zero tariffs, zero barriers and zero subsidies on non-auto industrial goods avoided a full-fledged trade war. Mr. Trump pushed the E.U. to the brink of a trade war to get an agreement to level the playing field for U.S.-E.U. commerce.

When Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker announced the deal Wednesday they included a push for World Trade Organization reforms that could reign in China.

"The world trading system is broken with high tariffs and barriers and technological stealing and [intellectual property] theft," said Mr. Kudlow.

U.S. Touts EU Trade Deal, Says Others Can Also Make Progress

By Susan Heavey

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Trump Touts 'Great Victory' At Downstate Steel Plant In First Visit To Illinois Since Taking Office

By Monique Garcia

Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump returned to Illinois on Thursday for his first visit since becoming president, taking a victory lap at a U.S. Steel plant in Downstate Granite City, where officials have credited his steel and aluminum tariffs for allowing the facility to re-open.

Speaking to the invitation-only crowd gathered at a warehouse on the plant grounds, Trump said he was "here to celebrate a great victory."

"After years of shutdowns and cutbacks, today the blast furnace here in Granite City is blazing bright, workers are back on the job, and we are once against pouring new American steel back into the spine of our country," he said.

The president's visit comes amid a growing divide about his administration's trade policies. That includes billions of dollars in tariffs on goods from China, which has helped the local steel industry but hurt the state's soybean farmers, who

ship more to China than any other state. As the U.S. has imposed tariffs on Chinese products, China has responded in kind by slapping retaliatory tariffs on American exports, such as Illinois soybeans.

"China tried to hurt the American farmer, because that way they were going to hurt me," Trump said. "And that way, you would go in November and you would vote for people that don't want borders, they don't care about crime, they want to get rid of ICE. Democrats."

Gov. Bruce Rauner wasn't on hand for Trump's stop in Granite City, which is located near St. Louis along the banks of the Mississippi River. Instead, he was scheduled to be in Peoria to sign legislation regarding tax credits. Trump didn't mention Rauner in his speech. The president was greeted by Missouri Gov. Mike Parson upon landing at the St. Louis airport, before taking a motorcade across the river to Illinois.

While Rauner has credited Trump and Vice President Mike Pence for a "roaring" economy and said it was "outstanding" that the steel plant is reopening after closing in 2015, he's also expressed concerns about the administration's positions on trade.

"I support the effort to change our trade agreements," Rauner said this week. "But I do not support us getting into a trade war."

Rauner has shown support for the Trump administration recently, after spending most of his term as governor trying to keep his distance from the controversial president.

Rauner narrowly won the March GOP primary over state Rep. Jeanne Ives of Wheaton and has looked for ways to unify the Republican conservative base in advance of the November election against Democrat J.B. Pritzker and third-party contender Sen. Sam McCann of Plainview, who is trying to build support among conservatives.

Pritzker released a statement calling Rauner a "cowardly governor" who has "been everything from Trump's silent partner to his biggest cheerleader" in working "lockstep with this president's attacks on healthcare and attempts to undermine working families across our state."

"When I'm governor, Illinois will be a firewall against this administration's devastation," Pritzker said.

Trump's Downstate visit also was aimed at boosting the fortunes of two Republican congressmen facing stiff contests in a region of Illinois supportive of the president, though, overall, Trump lost the state by 17 percentage points to Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The steel plant at the center of Trump's visit is in the congressional district of Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Bost of Murphysboro, who is facing a tight re-election contest against Democratic challenger Brendan Kelly, the St. Clair County state's attorney. Bost arrived with Trump on Air Force One.

Also attending the event was with U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, a Republican from Taylorville who is being challenged by Democrat Betsy Dirksen Londrigan of Springfield in another closely watched Downstate race. The dean of the state's House delegation, Republican U.S. Rep. John Shimkus of Collinsville, also was present.

"Farmers and producers in this area have invested in this president and this administration with their votes, and they wanted to see results, and they saw results yesterday," Davis said of the EU agreement.

Not mentioned in Trump's speech: imprisoned former Gov. Rod Blagojevich. It was nearly two months ago when Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One that he was considering commuting Blagojevich's 14-year prison sentence, which he described as an overly harsh penalty for what essentially amounted to a "foolish statement."

This week, Patti Blagojevich once again took to the media to advocate for her husband, writing an op-ed in the Washington Examiner and appearing on Fox News.

Last month, Illinois' Republican congressional delegation — including the federal lawmakers on hand Thursday — signed a letter asking Trump to leave Blagojevich's prison sentence intact, saying any clemency for the imprisoned former governor would "set a detrimental precedent" and damage efforts to combat public corruption.

Outside the event, the Democratic Party of Illinois led by new executive director state Rep. Christian Mitchell of Chicago demonstrated against Trump and the GOP congressmen. The protest included large, inflatable chickens with Trump-style hair, and it represented a more active and activist role the party is taking heading to November.

Ahead of the president's address, supporters lined the streets leading to the steel mill, waving flags and holding signs that read "Thank you Pres. Trump" and "Make Granite Great Again."

David Burritt, president and CEO of U.S. Steel, said restarting production at the facility feels "like a renaissance."

"We have a president that believes in you," Buritt told workers gathered in a steamy warehouse waiting for Trump's arrival. "He is fighting for us, and we have a lot of hard work to do."

Trump predicted strong gross domestic product growth when it is announced Friday and used the subject to launch into several frequent attacks on the media, particularly over his relations with Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin.

"If I would have used these (GDP) numbers during the campaign, the fake news back there would have said, 'he's exaggerating,' " Trump said.

"Look at all those cameras. All those cameras. Every stop I get all those cameras. This never happened to Obama. This never happened to Bush. This didn't happen. They just follow. They're dying to see us make a little bit of a mistake. They analyze every word. They say, 'Did he say that?' 'Could it have been.' 'Did he say something positive about Russia? I think he loves Russia.' "

Newly hired worker Chris Brown, 62, said he was living in Florida before he began working in a maintenance position at the plant about three weeks ago. He said he was in favor of Trump's tough stance on trade with other countries because it was bringing back jobs in industries that have suffered for years.

"For somebody my age, it means a lot," Brown said. "When I was getting out of high school there was a lot of industry like this, but it's all died out. I want to see it come back."

Chicago Tribune's Rick Pearson contributed from Chicago.

mcgarcia@chicagotribune.com

Twitter @moniquegarcia

President Trump Touts Tariffs At Granite City Steel Plant

By Jacob Barker

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump touched down at St. Louis Lambert International Airport Thursday afternoon en route to U.S. Steel's Granite City Works, where he lauded a positive impact from the tariffs he imposed on imported steel.

Greeting him were Missouri Gov. Mike Parson, on the job for just under two months after the resignation of Gov. Eric Greitens, and newly appointed Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe.

"Thanks to our tariffs, idle factories throughout our nations are roaring back to life," Trump told an enthusiastic crowd of supporters in Illinois.

Echoing his refrain that other countries have taken advantage of American wealth and workers, Trump said that before his election the United States was "the big, dumb piggy bank" that "everybody was robbing."

"We have the worst trade deals ever made in history. But now, they're becoming good again. We are here today because America never surrenders," he said.

In a speech that strayed from steel making to touch on North Korea, Russia, "fake news," the upcoming release of gross domestic product estimates and agriculture, Trump pledged that he would continue to support the steel industry for national security reasons.

"This is steel and we're watching this one closely, and it's going up, Dave, only up," he told U.S. Steel CEO David Burritt, who joined the president on stage during his speech.

"I would be in support of tariffs. But I can't be in support of Trump because all the other issues kind of outweigh the tariffs," he said, citing the president's environmental policies and his nominations to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump also was joined at the plant by Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., whose district includes the Granite City Works and has expressed support for the steel tariffs. He is facing a spirited challenge for his Congressional seat from Democratic St. Clair County State's Attorney Brendan Kelly. Also joining Trump was Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., and Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Ill, whose districts encompass some of the Metro East. Both are also facing November challengers.

U.S. Steel idled Granite City Works in December 2015 in the face of low steel prices and plummeting demand from customers in the domestic shale drilling business. Worker counts dipped as low as 100 people at the plant that a few years ago employed roughly 2,000. Activity at the plant had picked back up by 2017, with some 700 to 800 people using other facilities to finish raw steel made elsewhere.

But while Trump seeks to highlight a success story from his use of tariffs to reshape the country's trade relationships with both allies like Europe and Canada and competitors like China, Midwest farmers only a few dozen miles away are increasingly anxious about losing access to markets for their soybeans, corn, pork and other products. U.S. farmers have been one of the larger beneficiaries of the free trade policies that defined the world order over the last 30 years, but retaliatory duties from enormous markets like China have put their crops at a disadvantage to foreign competitors. Commodity prices had already been declining in recent years, squeezing farm income.

Signaling a desire to calm those fears a few months before midterm elections where farm state Republicans need to retain seats to maintain the party's hold on Congress, the Trump administration this week launched a $12 billion commodity price support plan. Farm groups responded tepidly.

"For farmers who will be renegotiating their line of credit for the coming year, it's welcome news but no substitute for the ability to sell what we produce overseas freely," Missouri Farm Bureau President Blake Hurst, who farms corn and soy in northwest Missouri, told the Post-Dispatch Wednesday. "It certainly implies these trade disputes will be going on for several months if not years, and that's not good news for American agriculture. Farmers need to see some progress with our ongoing disputes with the rest of the world."

Some of that progress appeared just a few hours later Wednesday, when Trump, standing alongside European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in the Rose Garden, announced they had agreed to hold off on any new tariffs and work to resolve disputes on Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs. Juncker also said the EU would import more American soybeans.

But many observers in Europe considered the moves as symbolic as the EU does not impose tariffs on soybean imports, limiting the impact on the futures market. Still, soy futures firmed up Thursday morning, with Chicago Board of Trade November soybean futures rising 3-1/4 cents at $8.79 a bushel.

But overall, prices have declined on worries over trade disputes. Hurst said Chinese importers are turning to Brazil and Argentina for soybean imports and offering less to American exporters to make up for the retaliatory tariffs their country placed on American soy.

"There isn't a single commodity that Missouri farmers produce that hasn't gone down in the last 90 days and isn't selling for less than the cost of production," Hurst said.

Trump Hails Illinois Steel Mill As Economic Success Story

By Jill Colvin

WMAQ-TV Chicago, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump on Thursday trumpeted the renewed success of an Illinois steel mill, pushing back against criticism that his escalating trade disputes are hurting American workers and farmers.

The president pointed to the U.S. Steel plant's reopening as a success story after he slapped tariffs on imported steel and aluminum last spring. On Wednesday, he and European leaders agreed to open talks to tear down trade barriers, a decision he called a "breakthrough."

"America never surrenders," Trump said in an address to workers at the company's steel coil warehouse in Granite City. "We don't wave the white flag."

Trump held events in Iowa and Illinois after he reached an accord with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at the White House on Wednesday to open talks to tear down trade barriers and address U.S. tariffs on steel imports. Trump also said the EU had agreed to buy more soybeans from American farmers, who have seen prices decline sharply since China imposed retaliatory tariffs.

Farmers and manufacturers have criticized tariffs imposed by Trump, warning that they will spur a global trade war and retaliatory tariffs from countries like China, Mexico and Canada that will damage their livelihoods and raise prices on consumers.

But Trump said he stepped forward to protect the U.S. steel industry for national security concerns and in solidarity with workers who had been hurt by what he called unfair trade agreements. In the past, Trump said, "Our steel towns became ghost towns," but after the U.S. engaged in "the worst trade deals ever made in history," he was negotiating better terms.

Trump brought to the stage the company's CEO and workers, who spoke of the importance of the plant to their community.

Earlier, Trump said his trade talks with European allies would benefit Iowa farmers who have been hurt by the fallout from his protectionist trade measures.

"We just opened up Europe for you farmers. You're not going to be too angry with Trump, I can tell you," the president said at the workforce development event in Peosta, Iowa, where he was joined by two Iowa Republicans, Gov. Kim Reynolds and Rep. Rod Blum. Copyright Associated Press

Trump Laments Decades Of US Trade Policy At Downstate Steel Plant

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

GRANITE CITY — President Donald Trump lamented decades of U.S. trade policy as he addressed steel workers downstate Thursday.

Trump told workers gathered at U.S. Steel's Granite City Works' Steel Coil Warehouse that other countries were able to target U.S. workers and companies and steal U.S. intellectual property.

He says past leaders allowed the U.S. trade deficit to balloon and complains: "They surrendered."

"If you don't have steel, you don't have a country," he said.

Trump has taken aggressive action on trade, slapping tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. That has prompted retaliatory action from countries that farmers and others worry will hurt their bottom lines.

U.S. Steel has credited Trump's decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports for its decision in March to fire up a local furnace that had sat idle for more than two years.

"We are once again pouring new American steel into the spine of our country," Trump said.

The president also defended his treatment of NATO allies at a summit earlier this month and is blaming the media for mischaracterizing it.

Trump said it's wrong to suggest he was too tough on members of the decades-old military alliance and too nice to Russia during his European trip.

Trump maintains that NATO is "better for Europe than it is for us." But he argues he strengthened the alliance by forcing members to commit to higher defense spending.

During the summit, Trump was widely criticized, even by fellow Republicans, for suggesting he saw little value in the alliance and for failing to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin for interfering in the 2016 election.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Donald Trump Defends Tariffs In Key Political Area: Farm Country

By David Jackson

USA Today, July 26, 2018

Facing criticism from allies and party worries about upcoming congressional elections, President Donald Trump

traveled to two farm states Thursday and urged backers to stick with him on trade, despite tariff battles with Europe and China that are undercutting crop prices.

Farmers have protested Trump's economic moves against China, saying Chinese retaliatory tariffs are hurting prices for soybeans, pork and other agricultural products.

Seeking to quell unrest, the White House this week announced a package of $12 billion in aid to farmers being hurt by the trade wars. Republican lawmakers, however, denounced that plan as welfare, and said the best solution to farmers' troubles is to simply eliminate the tariffs.

While discussing trade during a workforce development conference at Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta, Trump said, "The farmers love me; they voted for me."

At one point brandishing a campaign-style red hat that said "Make Our Farmers Great Again," Trump touted new trade talks with Europe and said his tariffs are designed to force countries like China to change what he called unfair trade practices.

China and European countries have retaliated with their own tariffs on U.S. products, Trump acknowledged, and farmers in particular are saying that the penalties are hurting sales.

Republicans and others have told Trump that the tariff wars are starting to hurt business people, including farmers and other key sources of votes in the November congressional elections.

"People are making their voices heard with this White House about the negative impact of tariffs, and the potential for greater negative impact," said Kevin Madden, a Republican consultant who has worked with private companies to promote free trade.

A coalition of conservative groups, including the National Taxpayers Union and Club for Growth, are urging Trump to pull back on his tariffs that are hurting American businesses.

Tariffs "act as a tax on American consumers, raise costs for our manufacturers and drive our jobs to other countries," these groups wrote in an op-ed for USA TODAY.

They could also hurt Republicans at the ballot box, no small thing as the GOP faces the possible loss of House and Senate majorities in the November elections.

Trump said the trade rivals are directing their tariffs toward certain products in pivotal political states, seeking to hurt him with voters.

"It's not nice what they're doing," Trump said.

Trump visited Iowa and Illinois a day after proclaiming new talks with European Union officials about eliminating all trade barriers between the U.S. and Europe.

Making the announcement following a meeting with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, Trump suggested he would hold off on auto and other new tariffs against Europe as the talks took place. He also said officials would try to "resolve" existing steel and aluminum tariffs, as well as "retaliatory tariffs" in general.

In Iowa, Trump told supporters that "we just opened up Europe for you farmers," and, "you're not going to be too angry with Trump, I can tell you."

Warning that "tariffs and bailouts" will lead to an economic meltdown, Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said "America's farmers don't want to be paid to lose – they want to win by feeding the world."

During his daylong tour of farm country, Trump said that the economy overall is flourishing. Noting the new economic growth numbers are due out Friday, Trump said, "I don't what they are, but there are predictions from 3.8 to 5.3 (percent)."

Farm states feature a number of close House and Senate races, and could be decisive as to whether Republicans or Democrats wind up with control of Congress.

Jennifer Duffy, senior editor with The Cook Political Report, said the question is whether Republican farmers feel relief by the fall, right ahead of elections.

"If this farm aid is real and gets delivered, there may not be an issue at all," she said. "If not, and farmers don't feel President Trump is being straight with them, there could be a real problem."

Trump and advisers said he and the farmers want the same thing: A fair trading system.

"He's been pushing to get better deals, and he feels like he's getting them," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders.

The critics, she said, "want to see some results – but so does the president."

Donald Trump Visits Iowa To Talk To Officials, Educators And Business Leaders

By William Petroski And Brianne Pfannenstiel

Des Moines (IA) Register, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump praised Rep. Rod Blum as "one of the most effective people in Congress," told Gov. Kim Reynolds "I'm very proud of you" and displayed John-Deere-green hats bearing the slogan "Make Farmers Great Again" during his visit to Peosta on Thursday.

His visit to the Northeast Iowa Community College just outside of Dubuque ostensibly was to discuss workforce development issues at a roundtable discussion with business leaders and Iowans who have benefited from skilled worker programs.

He also had the chance to talk up his 2016 Iowa victory.

"That was a great election. Wasn't that a great election?" he said.

Although the visit was not designed to focus on trade and tariffs, which have left Iowa farmers frustrated and jittery but hopeful for a long-term payoff, the president also talked about his $12 billion farm aid plan.

He claimed that all of the previous trade agreements were bad — "We don't have one trade deal that's any good," he said — and criticized countries that have adopted new tariffs in reaction to the tariffs he imposed tariffs.

"It's not nice what they're doing," he said.

The visit also had a political perk. He boosted fellow Republicans Reynolds and Blum, who both are facing competitive elections in November.

"(Blum) has been so incredible in so many ways," Trump said. "He fights so hard. He loves this state. He loves the people. I guess he's got a race against somebody they call absent Abby, because she never showed up to the statehouse."

Abby Finkenauer, a two-term state legislator from Dubuque, easily won the district's Democratic primary with 67 percent of the vote last month. Blum, an entrepreneur who heads a software company, was unopposed in the 2018 Republican primary.

They are seeking election to Iowa's 1st Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in northeast Iowa and includes the cities of Cedar Rapids, Waterloo and Dubuque.

"It's disappointing that Congressman Blum apparently spent his time on Air Force One talking political nicknames instead of telling the president how awful his Twitter trade war is for our farmers," Finkenauer said in a statement.

In May, Roll Call, a national race-handicapper, listed Blum as the most likely U.S. House member to lose in November, and election forecasters have called the race a toss-up as Finkenauer continues to drive strong fundraising numbers amid a rising national profile.

Once a reliably Democratic stronghold, Dubuque County was among those that swung most heavily from supporting Barack Obama in 2012 to Trump in 2016. Trump was the first Republican presidential candidate to carry Dubuque County since Dwight Eisenhower was re-elected in 1956.

Democrat Abby Finkenauer will face off against Republican Rep. Rod Blum in November in northeast Iowa's 1st Congressional District.

The visit is Trump's third to Iowa since he was elected in 2016. It's also the second by his administration in as many weeks to the district; Vice President Mike Pence was in Cedar Rapids on July 11.

Trump also talked up Reynolds, who is seeking her first full term as governor in her own right after stepping in as lieutenant governor when former Gov. Terry Branstad was appointed U.S. ambassador to China.

"I'm very proud of you," he told her from the stage. "In a sense, I feel a little bit responsible, because I took your other great governor and I sent him to China."

The forum itself gave Reynolds a chance to highlight the work she's done on one of her key legislative priorities: workforce development.

Reynolds has spearheaded the Future Ready Iowa program, which aims to increase the state's skilled workforce. The Legislature approved a bill during its last legislative session creating a number of targeted job training programs, and it passed with little opposition. But Democrats were critical that it lacked the funding to be truly successful.

She spoke to a roomful of business leaders from across the state Thursday.

The president met — or greeted — other Iowans when he landed at Dubuque Regional Airport on Thursday morning. About 150 invited guests, many wearing red Trump campaign hats, waited for him.

The pro-Trump crowd cheered and chanted "USA, USA," as he got off the plane and waved. Blum was behind the president as he came down the aircraft's ramp to the tarmac. He was also greeted by Reynolds and the mayors of Pella, Marshalltown and Bondurant. Those Iowa towns were hit by tornadoes last week.

Trump then headed straight to the crowd, using both hands to greet them as one woman yelled: "We love you!"

Some of the supporters' signs read: "Ronald Reagan is my second favorite president" and "Buy American, hire American," according to a pool report.

They cheered him again as he left and got into the black presidential limousine.

Trump headed the 14 miles to Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta for a roundtable discussion on workforce development with Iowa business leaders and educators, as well as Reynolds and Blum.

Reynolds and acting Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg were at the airport to greet Trump, along with Marshalltown Mayor Joel Greer and Assistant Fire Chief Chief Christopher Cross, who were there to talk with Trump about tornado damage to their community. Trump, making his third trip to Iowa since the 2016 election, was scheduled to spend about two hours in Dubuque before flying to Granite City, Illinois, for an event at a U.S. Steel Corp. plant.

The mayors didn't have much time to talk to the president.

"The president did ask me, 'How's it going?' and I reflexively said, 'Fine,' but caught myself and said, 'But we still need help,'"Greer said.

Marshalltown is hoping for a federal disaster declaration that could bring aid to the town. Greer said he was not able to bring up the topic with Trump's staff at the airport, so he'll have to go through the regular channels.

But he said it was still worth it to make the trip to speak with Reynolds, who he said has been "a blessing to Marshalltown" for the attention she's given to the city.

President Trump Assures Iowa Farmers Amid Uncertainty Over Future Of Trade War

By Alexander Mallin Stephanie Ebbs

ABC News, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump in Iowa Thursday assured farmers feeling the fallout from his trade war that he has achieved major gains in bringing countries to the negotiating table with threats of tariffs and doubled down on some of his tough rhetoric targeting China.

"China is doing a little number, they want to attack the farm belt because they know the farmers love me," Trump said. "And I said they're not going to win, just so you understand. We have all the cards, we're going to win."

Farmers face a nearly 20 percent drop in the price of soybean harvests this year and more than 15 percent drop in the price of corn, according to the Iowa Corn Growers Association. The new tariffs are seen as the primary cause.

Speaking with ABC News Wednesday, farmers across the state said that Chinese retaliatory tariffs have already caused major losses for their operations.

One hog farmer said he estimates tariffs are costing him about $25-30$ per pig, while corn and soybean farmers have faced a 15-20 percent drop in the price of their harvests as well.

Speaking on a workforce development roundtable at the Northeast Iowa Community college, President Trump was confident in his defense of his trade battles, slamming past "worst-ever made" past trade deals reached between the U.S. and other countries.

Gregg Hora of Fort Dodge, Iowa, says farmers are anxious about the financial impact of a protracted trade war. "Patience is wearing thin on U.S. pork producers because the next six months of market prices – there's a lot of red ink," Hora said.

"We don't have one trade deal that's good," Trump said.

Trump has previously said that the retaliatory tariffs are unfair and that he is prepared to tax even more goods imported from China.

He announced on Wednesday that he reached a deal with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to prevent any further tariffs on European cars.

"We just opened up Europe for you farmers, you're not going to be too angry with Trump," Trump said.

The administration also announced $12 billion in emergency aid for farmers this week.

According to the U.S. Trade Representative website, countries comprising the European Union already "rank[ed] 1st as an export market for the United States in 2016," with the EU countries ranking fourth as an agriculture export market for the United States.

During the panel Trump lavished praise on Republican Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, who in April when the tariffs were first unveiled announced her opposition to the move, saying, "nobody wins in a trade war."

Trump is also set to visit Granite City Works, a steel mill in Granite City, Ill., outside of St. Louis, which recently restarted two of its furnaces and hired hundreds of workers as a direct result of the tariffs the administration placed on imported steel.

Trump Wants Auto Trade Probe To Continue, Action To Be Deferred: Ross

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Wilbur Ross Says U.S. Investigation Of Auto Tariffs For Europe Will Go On Despite Deal

By Dave Boyer

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Thursday the administration's preparations for tariffs on European autos will continue despite President Trump's deal with European Union leaders to suspend any new tariffs.

"We've been directed by the president to continue the investigation, get our material together but not actually implement anything pending the outcome of the negotiations," Mr. Ross told reporters.

He said Commerce will submit its report on auto tariffs sometime in August, and imposing them "may not be necessary."

In the meantime, he said, "Steel and aluminum tariffs stay in place."

Mr. Trump announced with European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker Wednesday that both sides would hold off on any new tariffs and negotiate toward a "zero tariff" relationship. Mr. Juncker agreed that the European Union will purchase more U.S. soybeans and liquefied natural gas.

Mr. Ross credited steel and aluminum tariffs for the agreement.

"If we hadn't had steel and aluminum tariffs, we never would have gotten to the point we are now," he said. "This is a real vindication of the president's trade policy."

Europe Welcomes Trade Steps With U.S. But Many Questions Remain

The details of how the accord meant to avoid a trade war will be executed remain unclear

By Valentina Pop And Emre Peker

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

US-EU Trade Agreement Wins Cautious Welcome In Germany

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

BERLIN (AP) — Political and business leaders in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, on Thursday welcomed a deal to defuse trade tensions between the U.S. and the European Union, but relief was tempered with caution that details must still be firmed up.

At a meeting in Washington on Wednesday, President Donald Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker pulled back from the brink of a trade war over autos and agreed to open talks to tear down trade barriers. But the agreement was vague and the coming negotiations with Europe are sure to be contentious.

The talk about cutting trade barriers "sends an important signal of detente," said Dieter Kempf, the head of the Federation of German Industries.

"The tariff spiral in trans-Atlantic trade appears to have been halted for now," he added. "But now deeds must follow words."

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who was on a visit to South Korea, celebrated the agreement as evidence that unity among the European Union's 28 members paid off. "We have seen that when Europe is united, our word counts," he said.

"America and Europe are not enemies," Maas said. "I hope that this realization will once again become what it was until recently at the White House: a matter of course."

He said that the results of the meeting in Washington were above expectations and "we will now have some time."

Juncker said the U.S. and the EU have agreed to hold off on new tariffs, suggesting that the United States will suspend plans to start taxing European auto imports — a move that would have marked a major escalation in trade tensions between the allies.

The head of the German Association of the Automotive Industry, Bernhard Mattes, said the agreement is "good news for business and consumers on both sides of the Atlantic."

"What has to be done now is to fill the agreement with life and quickly start negotiations," he added in a statement.

BusinessEurope, an umbrella organization of European business lobbies, declared that "reason has prevailed."

"The agenda for talks between the EU and the U.S. to de-escalate the current trade conflict is the right one," said its president, Pierre Gattaz, adding that "European business is ready to give its contribution in the discussions."

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Europeans Are Skeptical Of Trade Truce With Trump

By Quentin Ariès And James McAuley

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

BRUSSELS — European officials are struggling to make sense of what seems a temporary trade war truce between President Trump and the European Union, following the visit of E.U. leaders to Washington this week.

Trump and Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, announced Wednesday that they had agreed to work toward resolving disputes over steel and aluminum tariffs, delay proposed car tariffs and talk about a bilateral trade deal.

"Objectively this a good news, that we avoided so far tariffs on cars," said a senior E.U. diplomat, who like many officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive internal discussions.

In capitals across Europe, a number of national officials echoed that sentiment, heralding the meeting as having prevented a trade war. German Finance Minister Peter Altmaier, for instance, called it a "breakthrough." But others were wary, wondering whether it's realistic to expect Europe to buy more soybeans from the United States, as Juncker signaled, or to become "a massive buyer" of U.S. liquefied natural gas, as Trump declared.

And to some European eyes, the more feasible parts of what Trump and Juncker discussed look a lot like the goals of what was known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, an initiative launched by President Barack Obama that aspired to free trade with Europe.

Wednesday's joint statement between Juncker and Trump included calls for easing trade barriers in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, medical products and services — sectors that also were discussed within TTIP. Those negotiations have been mostly dormant since 2016, when they were sidetracked by Britain voting to leave the European Union and the United States electing Trump.

"TTIP was way too wide, and negotiations were stuck, as Americans were not keen to discuss greater access to their public procurements, while Europeans were reluctant on the U.S. importing more agricultural products," said a European Commission official.

According to another diplomat, some countries fear that communicating a revival of TTIP could anger voters. From the beginning, the E.U.-U.S. trade proposal triggered resistance from social and environmental activists. Reopening talks during a Trump presidency could backfire, as the next elections for the European Parliament are scheduled for May 2019.

With a White House that frequently changes course and on the spur of a moment, economic analysts hesitated to cast any definitive judgment on the Trump-Juncker detent.

"Is it actual, or is it just perfunctory?" said Maria Demertzis, the deputy director of Breugel, a Brussels-based think tank focusing on economic issues.

As far as soybean imports, prices from Argentina and Brazil tend to be a good deal lower than prices from the United States, according to an E.U. official.

U.S. prices have fallen somewhat in recent weeks, since China enacted its own set of soybean tariffs. But soybeans intended for Chinese markets can't necessarily be redirected to the European Union, which has stringent regulations on genetically modified foods.

According to a senior E.U. official, there have been no discussions about lifting those standards to purchase U.S. soybeans. The same official said that agricultural products were outside the talks between Juncker and Trump, directly contradicting comments from Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who said Tuesday that "all agricultural products are something that will be discussed."

"Ross can say what he wishes, but it does not correspond to the joint statement," the diplomat said.

A similar situation exists regarding liquefied natural gas, said a European diplomat working on trade issues. That provision probably was meant as a German concession to the White House, the diplomat said, given Trump's recent anger about the Nord Stream 2 pipeline deal, which will bring gas to Germany from Russia.

Nord Stream 2 hasn't been abandoned, though. And U.S. gas remains far more expensive because of shipping costs.

"The idea of significantly more LNG shipments to EU absurd," tweeted Anthony Gardner, a former U.S. ambassador to the European Union. "It is not price competitive with piped gas."

For some trade analysts, the concern was less about the particulars of the Trump-Juncker handshake this week than how Europe plans to deal with Trump, who only recently called the European Union a "trade foe."

"Let's go back a step," said Demertzis, the economic analyst. "What's the strategy here, to the extent that the E.U. has a strategy?"

She noted that the bloc has recently signed major trade deals with other partners, notably Japan. Meanwhile, it's contesting the Trump administration's steel and aluminum tariffs — which remain in effect — before the World Trade Organization, and it has pledged proportionality in retaliatory measures toward U.S. products.

"If you go and strike a deal with Mr. Trump, you have to think how that fits into the strategy," she said. "Striking a deal would do damage, in my view, to what you're trying to do on a broader level."

McAuley reported from Paris.

Europe Averts A Trade War With Trump. But Can It Trust Him?

By Steven Erlanger

New York Times, July 26, 2018

BRUSSELS — When he arrived in the Oval Office for negotiations over their growing trade war, Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, brought a small gift for President Trump, a renowned admirer of military commanders. It was a photograph of the cemetery in Luxembourg where Gen. George S. Patton is buried.

Mr. Juncker, a wily, if often maligned, former prime minister of tiny Luxembourg, added an inscription, alluding to the shared sacrifice of Americans and Europeans during World War II. "Dear Donald,'' it read. "Let us remember our common history."

Mr. Juncker left the Oval Office on Wednesday with a deal — or at least a truce — that for the moment has defused the Trump administration's growing trade war with Brussels, while bringing relief across Europe, especially in Germany. Yet if Europe's political and business leaders are cautiously optimistic that an economic crisis has been averted, they are also wary, given their history with Mr. Trump in the 18 months since he has taken office.

Even as Mr. Trump cast the meeting on Wednesday as a great success, and offered gratitude to Mr. Juncker, the question is whether the deal represents a meaningful improvement in the severely strained trans-Atlantic alliance, or is simply another example of the unpredictable approach of a president who has spent months mocking and undermining European leaders — even describing the European bloc as a "foe."

"The question is, how much do you give in to a bully?" asked Maria Demertzis, the deputy director of Bruegel, an economic research institute in Brussels. "This could just be perfunctory, and if it just stops extra tariffs, that's fine. But you can't really depend on Trump. His understanding of global trade is bilateral balance, which is as good as arbitrary, given global supply chains. And it depends on what side of the bed he wakes up on tomorrow."

For Mr. Juncker, the outcome was a triumph, even if he made concessions. The negotiations are also a reminder that Germany and its chancellor, Angela Merkel, still dominate the European Union. Mr. Trump's threat to impose large new unilateral tariffs on imported automobiles shook German business to the core — and it would also have had a large impact on the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain and other countries that are important suppliers and manufacturers to the German car industry.

Now the president has agreed to push that threat to the side as the two parties begin broader negotiations. The trade war erupted after Mr. Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum, and the European Union responded with retaliatory tariffs on iconic American products like bluejeans, bourbon and Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Those tariffs will remain for now, but will be part of the negotiations.

"Juncker's achievement was to get Trump to say publicly that he would reconsider steel and aluminum tariffs and not impose car tariffs in return for a negotiation," said Guntram B. Wolff, director of Bruegel. "For the E.U., the gun is still loaded but it's not pointed at our heads, so for us it's a good moment to negotiate."

Indeed, some analysts argued that the new negotiations effectively represent a resurrection, in some fashion, of the effort begun by former President Barack Obama — and halted by President Trump — for a free-trade pact with Europe, known then as the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T.T.I.P. Together, the United States and the European Union comprise half of the global economy, and analysts were optimistic about the commitment by Mr. Trump and Mr. Juncker to work together to overhaul the World Trade Organization, especially given the rising power of China.

Focusing on the W.T.O. also better fits the European Union's overall strategy, which is to defend the multilateral world order of rules and law — rather than the kind of bilateral deal Mr. Juncker and Mr. Trump just discussed.

For Daniela Schwarzer, the director of the German Council on Foreign Relations, the mere fact that Mr. Trump negotiated directly with Mr. Juncker, as the head of the European Union institution in charge of trade, is vital.

"There was a real danger that the unified position of the E.U. could break open if Trump singled out industries and countries on tariffs," Ms. Schwarzer said. "Trade must remain an E.U. competence, otherwise the single market is meaningless."

Mr. Trump has angrily denounced America's trade deficit with the European Union, even as he has come under increasing domestic political pressure from farmers, businesses and the auto industry over his tariffs. On Wednesday, Mr. Juncker promised to increase purchases of American soybeans and American liquefied natural gas, or L.N.G. But Ms. Demertzis said it was less clear how quickly the Europeans could deliver on those promises — meaning that the immediate value for Mr. Trump may be political.

"Europe has decided to change its trade policies," said Fredrik Erixon, director of the European Center for International Political Economy, "which gives Trump something to sell to his political base."

Tellingly, Bruno Maçães, the former Portuguese secretary of state for European Affairs and the author of "The Dawn of Eurasia," points out that Brussels approved only last Friday some genetically modified American soybeans to be sold in the European Union, an old American demand that would have helped the Washington talks.

European officials said that their offer on soybeans was important for Mr. Trump and for the success of the meeting, given that roughly 30 percent of American soybean production has traditionally gone to China. "I thank you for that, Jean-Claude," Mr. Trump said, going off-script from an agreed statement.

European officials and analysts acknowledged that Mr. Trump's threat to impose tariffs on the auto industry was a powerful one that forced a European response, despite vows not to negotiate as long as the metal tariffs were in force. As for Mr. Juncker's claim that the suspension of that threat was "a major concession," Mr. Maçães was amused.

"So if I threaten to burn down a house unless the owner pays me, and refrain from doing it when he pays, there were concessions on both sides?" he asked.

Still, it was a great relief for Germany, whose foreign minister, Heiko Maas, welcomed the agreement to start talks. It shows, he said on Thursday, that "The answer to America First can only be: Europe United."

In a speech in Tokyo, Mr. Maas also called for a strategic partnership among like-minded middle powers, like Germany and Japan, to preserve the liberal world order against big predatory powers like China, Russia and now, presumably, the United States.

Indeed, European leaders now seem to have concluded that the only way to deal with Mr. Trump is to negotiate with him — a stance Mr. Juncker and other Europeans once rejected as inimical to the global system.

For Ms. Demertzis, there are dangers in this new tactic. Not only does it cut against Europe's stance as the great defender of the multilateral order, it also risks feeding the tiger, the unpredictable Mr. Trump.

"We haven't seen the end of this, that's for sure," she said. "The only thing that drives the message home in Washington is bad outcomes. The E.U. must stay the course and use proportional measures to whatever comes out of Washington and take the heat until the message gets home."

Milan Schreuer contributed reporting.

Trump Steel Tariffs Bring Hope, Prosperity Back To Granite City

By Peter Navarro

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 25, 2018

Hiding in plain sight in a suburb of St. Louis is one of the great success stories of President Donald J. Trump's tough trade policies. This is the rebirth of the Granite City steelworks, idled in 2015 — along with about 2,000 steelworkers — under a drowning flood of subsidized foreign imports.

President Trump, who is visiting Granite City today, helped engineer the steelworks' rebirth with the imposition of a 25 percent tariff on foreign steel. This action, along with a companion 10 percent tariff on foreign aluminum imports, was taken in the interest of national security under the authority of Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. As

President Trump correctly noted upon signing the steel tariffs on March 8, "Without steel, you don't have a country."

On the same day the steel tariff was announced, U.S. Steel's Chief Executive Officer Dave Burritt promised to immediately restart one of two blast furnaces along with its steel-making facilities at Granite City. Just last month, Burritt announced the reopening of the second blast furnace by October, promising more great jobs at great wages in a community that had been decimated by the plant's idling.

Granite City's rebirth is hardly an isolated event. The much bigger success story is that of a tariff-catalyzed renaissance in steel and aluminum production across this great land, with many of the reborn facilities in forgotten, "flyover" communities urgently in need of manufacturing jobs.

For example, beyond Granite City, in the steel industry, we have borne witness to a $500 million expansion and the reopening of a seamless pipe mill in Baytown, Texas. We have seen the return of at least 1,000 workers as a result of a restart of an idled mill in Lorain, Ohio, and the building of a new rebar micro mill in Frostproof, Fla.

In the aluminum industry, new or restarted aluminum smelters are firing up in places like New Madrid, Mo.; Hawesville, Ky.; and Warrick, Ind. New or restarted aluminum rolling mills or extrusion facilities are likewise in evidence in places like Ashland, Guthrie and Lewisport, Ky.; Huntingdon, Tenn.; Trenton, Ohio; and Goose Creek, S.C.

Together, these tariff-catalyzed — and tax-cut assisted — investments will add billions of dollars in new investment, millions of metric tons of aluminum and steel production, and thousands of jobs to the national economy — while helping to build up our manufacturing base and shore up gaps in our defense industrial base. This is an economy experiencing rapid growth, historically low unemployment (particularly among blacks and Hispanics) and rising wages.

Even as America is now bearing witness to a rebirth of its aluminum and steel industries — and a broader boom in the American economy — critics of the Trump tariffs continue to insist that such tariffs will ultimately be self-defeating. They warn that the Trump tariffs are simply "taxes" that will raise the prices of "downstream" goods like autos, airplanes and beer cans — and ultimately cost more jobs than they create.

Like the falsely rumored death of Missouri's Mark Twain, these higher costs have, however, been greatly exaggerated. For example, a 10 percent tariff on aluminum may raise the cost of a six-pack of beer made in a St. Louis brewery by about two cents. At the other end of the spectrum, the cost increase for a mid-sized Boeing 737, which has a list price of about $120 million, is around $200,000 — less than two-tenths of 1 percent. These relatively small costs are necessary to protect national security.

Critics of President Trump's trade policies have also warned of the dangers of retaliation by our trading partners — even as China has singled out farmers in particular for punishing tariffs. Such foreign coercion raises a much broader issue that deserves public debate: Should we as a nation bend to the will — and bullying — of countries that are exploiting us with their unfair trade practices and, in China's case, stealing our technologies and intellectual property?

Surely at the coffee shops and kitchen tables across America, the answer must be a resounding "No!" The abiding fact here is that America has some of the lowest tariffs and non-tariff barriers in the world, and all that has gotten us are threats to our national security from a flood of imports and a more than half-trillion-dollar trade deficit every year that transfers our wealth, jobs and factories to foreign lands.

President Trump's trade policies are putting an end to this globalist insanity. His tariffs are both a reasonable and cost-effective tool to defend industries like aluminum and steel. The broader goal is a world where trade is fair, balanced and reciprocal; and American businesses and workers will win because they will finally compete on a level playing field.

Peter Navarro is a White House trade and manufacturing policy adviser.

Trump Trade War: U.S. Stock Market Is Faring Better Than China's Since Dispute Began

By Adam Shell

USA Today, July 26, 2018

Economists say there are no winners in a trade war, and American farmers, appliance companies and automakers are proof that tariffs can inflict financial harm.

But if you're using the stock market as a measure of whose winning the trade dispute, the U.S. has a clear lead over China and its other trading partners.

While stock prices are just one way of gauging who's feeling more of the ill effects of tariffs, there's no disputing that shares of U.S. companies are performing better than China-based stocks and other foreign markets, says Alec Young, the New York-based managing director of global markets research for FTSE Russell.

"There's a lot of ways to judge this and I expect a lot of twists and turns, but if we just look through the lens of the market, we've seen much stronger U.S. stock performance," says Young.

The Standard & Poor's 500, a stock index filled with America's biggest companies that get more than 43 percent of their revenues from overseas sales, is up 6.5 percent this year through Wednesday's close. China's Shanghai composite is down more than 12 percent over the same period, and major stock indexes in Japan and Europe are down a little less than 1 percent.

The better performance of the closely watched U.S. stock index is good news for individual investors, as there is $3.4 trillion invested in index funds that track the S&P 500 in

all sorts of accounts, ranging from 401(k)s and IRAs to mutual funds and exchange traded funds, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. A 401(k) investor with a $100,000 investment in the large-company stock index at the start of 2018 was sitting on a gain of $6,500 through July 25, compared to a loss of roughly $12,000 for a Chinese investor that began the year with a similar-sized investment in the Shanghai composite.

So why are shares of U.S. companies holding up better, even though Kate Warne, investment strategist at St. Louis-based brokerage Edward Jones, says all markets have been "hampered" by tariffs and worries about the possibility of additional levies and more trade disruptions?

Reasons include:U.S. is negotiating from position of strength

The tariff dispute comes at a time when the U.S. economy is performing extremely well, Warne says. And that enables President Trump to negotiate a better deal from a position of strength.

Corporate profits are on track to grow by more than 20 percent for the second straight quarter, its best back-to-back performance since 2010. The U.S. jobless rate is at an 18-year low. And the economy is picking up, with economists forecasting second-quarter GDP growth of 4 percent, which would mark the fastest pace since 2014. China, as well as Europe and Japan, on the other hand, are experiencing slowing growth.

The U.S. economy is also benefiting from lower corporate tax bills and government spending.

"Stock markets are barometers of domestic conditions, and they show the short-term outlook for China isn't as positive as for the U.S.," Warne explains.

That's not to say individual U.S. companies won't experience a hit to profits from the tariffs.

General Motors, the nation's biggest automaker, for example, said Wednesday that higher commodity costs, mainly from steel, which has risen in price since the president announced a 25 percent tariff in March, took a $300 million bite out of its quarterly earnings. GM shares fell 4.6 percent, as the company cut its forecast for full-year profits due to rising costs.

Similarly, appliance maker Whirlpool said Tuesday that demand for its washing machines was "very soft" from April through June after it raised prices to cover higher costs related to "raw material inflation."

U.S. farmers have also taken a hit after China, which is the largest importer of U.S. soybeans, retaliated with tariffs on that crop.Investors bet on Trump deal-making

Despite fears that the trade dispute could spiral out of control, slowing global growth and dampening investor and business confidence, Wall Street pros still believe the president's use of tariffs as a negotiating tool will likely be a winner.

If Trump wins concessions from China or the European Union, it could prove bullish for stocks as trade terms improve for U.S. companies.

"Right or wrong, many investors still feel the U.S. has the upper hand in this battle, and will win in the end," says Randy Frederick, vice president of trading and derivatives at the Schwab Center for Financial Research.China has more to lose

Chinese exports to the U.S. measured in dollars outnumber incoming American goods to China by a 3 to 1 margin. Remember, nearly 70 percent of the U.S. economy is driven by domestic spending by consumers. China, which is running a $280 billion trade surplus with the U.S, according to data from financial firm Stifel, can't risk losing too much of its American business, Wall Street pros say.

"The U.S. is a customer of size with buying power that is hard to replace," says John Stoltzfus, chief investment strategist at Oppenheimer Asset Management.

And although tariffs could cause prices for consumer products ranging from cars to washing machines to rise, "the U.S. does not need China as much as China needs the U.S.," says Barry Bannister, head of institutional equity strategy at Stifel.

So far, there is "little evidence trade is having a negative impact on economic data," says Young of FTSE Russell, adding that the massive U.S. economy is more insulated from trade strife because growth comes from many sectors of the economy, including industries, such as health care, which are not as hard-hit by tariffs as are industrial companies.

Trump Uses Taxpayer-funded Trip To Campaign For GOP Candidates

By Seung Min Kim

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

President Trump on Thursday used a taxpayer-funded trip to Illinois to openly advocate for electing Republicans to Congress — blurring the line between official and political events in the heat of the midterm campaign season.

"You've got to vote Republican, folks, you've got to vote Republican," Trump said during the speech at a steel plant in Granite City, Ill., that had recently reopened. "Vote for these two congressmen; they know what we're doing. They know what they're doing. They're tough, and they're smart."

Trump didn't name the lawmakers, but three Illinois Republicans accompanied him during his tour of the plant, according to the White House: Reps. Mike Bost, Rodney Davis and John Shimkus. Bost represents the district Trump traveled to on Thursday and has been one of the most fervent Republican supporters of the president's tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley told reporters on Air Force One that "there is no legal prohibition" on endorsing political candidates at official, taxpayer-funded events.

"It is no surprise that the president would want people in Congress who support his agenda," Gidley said. "These were official events talking about the economic impact this president has had in the Midwest."

Noting the deal this week between the United States and the European Union to defuse trade tensions, Trump also accused China of retaliating against the United States on trade to get Democrats elected this fall.

"China tried to hurt the American farmer," Trump said, "because that way, they were going to hurt me, and that way, you would go in November and you would vote for people that don't want borders, they don't care about crime, they want to get rid of ICE — Democrats."

In a trade-focused swing through the Midwest on Thursday, Trump not only promoted his tariff policies and touted his agreement with the E.U. to calm an escalating trade war but also blasted Democrats over immigration and complained about the news media.

As he had done in previous public speeches, Trump falsely claimed that he won the women's vote against Hillary Clinton in 2016. He won the white women's vote, according to exit polling, but he lost the overall women's vote to Clinton, with 54 percent of women supporting the Democrat and 41 percent backing him.

"I did win that women's vote, didn't I?" Trump asked, to applause. "Remember they said, 'Why would women vote for Trump?' Well, I don't know, but I got more than she did, that's pretty clever."

In a contentious week for the relationship between the White House and its press corps, Trump also repeatedly referred to the news media and the cameras that had followed him to Granite City, saying that the media never followed his predecessors and that reporters were overly scrutinizing his every word.

"They're dying to see us make a little bit of a mistake. They analyze every word. They say, 'Did he say that? Could it have been? Did he say something positive about Russia? I think he loves Russia,' " Trump said, mocking a journalist. "They analyze every single word, and they follow us. And you know what? The good news is: We can get the word out."

Of his recent trip to Europe, Trump said: "They said I was too nasty to NATO and too nice to Russia. Figure that one out."

He proudly proclaimed that "U.S. steel is back," and his daughter Ivanka Trump, a White House senior adviser, briefly got on stage to tell the crowd that "this administration loves its steel workers."

Trump also talked of the United States getting "ripped off" on trade in the past and said: "Together, we're sending a message to our foreign competitors. The days of plundering American jobs and wealth . . . those days are over."

"We will not let anyone bully our wonderful American farmers," Trump said. "We are going to stick together and win for our farmers and our factory workers, our steelworkers, here we are, all across this nation."

Trump Is Using Tariffs To Advance A Radical Free-trade Agenda

By Marc A. Thiessen

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

Give President Trump credit. When he chastised NATO allies over their failure to spend adequately on our common defense, his critics said he was endangering the Atlantic alliance. Instead, his tough stance persuaded allies to spend billions more on defense, strengthening NATO instead.

Now, Trump is doing the same on trade. At the Group of Seven summit in Quebec, Trump was roundly criticized for publicly berating allies over their trade practices and provoking a needless trade war. Well, once again, it appears Trump is being proved right. On Wednesday, he and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced a cease-fire in their trade war and promised to seek the complete elimination of most trade barriers between the United States and the European Union. "We agreed today . . . to work together toward zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers, and zero subsidies on non-auto industrial goods," declared the two leaders in a joint statement.

Zero tariffs. Wednesday's breakthrough with the European Union shows that, contrary to what his critics allege, Trump is not a protectionist; rather, he is using tariffs as a tool to advance a radical free-trade agenda.

In a little-noticed interview with Fox News's Maria Bartiromo earlier this month, Trump revealed that during the G-7 summit he made a sweeping proposal. "I said, 'I have an idea, everybody. I'll guarantee you we'll do it immediately. Nobody pay any more tax, everybody take down your barriers. No barriers, no tax. Everybody, are you all set?' . . . You know what happened? Everybody said, 'Uh, can we get onto another subject?' " Trump offered to eliminate all trade barriers — and his supposedly pro-free-trade allies passed. Right before his meeting with Juncker this week, he repeated the offer, tweeting, "The European Union is coming to Washington tomorrow to negotiate a deal on Trade. I have an idea for them. Both the U.S. and the E.U. drop all Tariffs, Barriers and Subsidies!"

Trump knows that most of our trading partners don't really want free trade; they want managed trade, where they can get access to U.S. markets while protecting certain industries from U.S. competition. Trump's strategy to get them to drop these protectionist barriers is to impose crushing tariffs. At a rally earlier this week, Trump explained his

strategy for getting to zero tariffs. "You know, other countries have tariffs on us. So, when I say, 'Well, I'm going to put tariffs on them,' they all start screaming, 'He's using tariffs,' " Trump said. "I said [to the European Union], 'You have to change.' They didn't want to change. I said, 'Okay. Good. We're going to tariff your cars.' . . . They said, 'When can we show up? When can we be there?' [Laughter.] 'Would tomorrow be okay?' Oh, folks, stick with us. Stick with us."

Now Trump's hard-line trade strategy is being vindicated. Not only is the E.U. negotiating zero tariffs, but also it agreed to immediately buy more American soybeans — which helps Trump in his trade battle with China. After Trump imposed tariffs on $34 billion worth of Chinese goods, China responded with retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products, including soybeans. Beijing knows that China is the single largest importer of U.S. soybeans, and that about 96 percent of U.S. soybeans are grown in 18 states — all but two of which voted for Trump in 2016. Their tariffs left soybean farmers none too happy with Trump and gave a political boost to vulnerable Senate Democrats in soy-producing farm states such as Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.), Joe Donnelly (Ind.) and Claire McCaskill (Mo.).

Now, Trump has enlisted the European Union to help U.S. soybean farmers to counteract the repercussions of Chinese tariffs, in addition to the $12 billion in aid he has promised for U.S. farmers. That's three-dimensional trade chess.

Earlier this week, Trump tweeted, "Tariffs are the greatest! Either a country which has treated the United States unfairly on Trade negotiates a fair deal, or it gets hit with Tariffs. It's as simple as that." Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't. Trump is a long way from a final deal. And in trade, nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to. But this is a surprisingly positive first step. If Trump succeeds in using trade wars to bring down European and Chinese trade barriers, he may end up being one of the greatest free-trade presidents in history.

Trump Floats Possible 5.3 Percent GDP Growth In Second Quarter

By Steven Nelson

Washington Examiner, July 26, 2018

President Trump floated the possibility Thursday that the economy grew at its fastest rate in 15 years in the second quarter of 2018.

Trump said he heard an analyst predict 5.3 percent gross domestic product growth ahead of a Friday morning report from the Commerce Department.

Trump said he personally doubts that growth was so high, but that he believes the figure will be large nonetheless.

"You'll have very big numbers announced tomorrow. I don't know what the they are. A lot of big predictions," Trump told a crowd in Granite City, Ill.

"Whatever those numbers are, watch for them. Somebody predicted today 5.3," Trump said. "I don't think that's going to happen, 5.3. If it has the 4 in front of it, we're happy. If it has like a 3, but its a, a 3.8, 3.9, 3.7, we're OK, but these are unthinkable numbers. If I would have used these numbers during the campaign, the fake news back there would have said, 'He's exaggerating.'"

If GDP growth exceeds 5.2 percent, it would be the highest quarterly growth rate since late 2003, MarketWatch reports. GDP growth hit 5.2 percent in the third quarter of 2014, but during the first five economic quarters of Trump's administration GDP has fluctuated between about 1 percent and slightly more than 3 percent.

Kudlow Says Friday's GDP Number Is Going To Be 'Big'

CNBC, July 26, 2018

White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow predicted that the second-quarter GDP release Friday will live up to the mounting hype. div > div.group > p:first-child">

"You're going to get a very good economic growth number tomorrow. Big," Kudlow, head of the National Economic Council, told the Fox Business Network in an interview Thursday.

While he said he could not speculate on where the number will land specifically, he did not disagree with a suggestion that it would be in the 4 to 4.5 percent range.

"I have no reason to disagree with that, but I have no knowledge, no information," Kudlow told FBN. "We won't hear about that until way later today."

Kudlow is the latest administration official to talk about an economic data point ahead of its release, something not historically common from the White House. President Donald Trump raised eyebrows in early June when he tweeted that he was "looking forward" to the release of the May nonfarm payrolls report, just an hour before it came out.

Economists are figuring gross domestic product for the three-month period to come in at 4.1 percent for the first reading, according to a Reuters survey. If that happens, it will be the best single-quarter reading since the third quarter of 2014, when growth registered a 5.2 percent gain, the high-water point during Barack Obama's presidency.

Estimates vary on what the final number would be Friday. Barclays is on the high end with a 5.2 percent forecast, while CNBC's Rapid Update survey of top economists sees a 4.2 percent increase. The Atlanta Fed is tracking at 3.8 percent, while the New York Fed is on the low end at 2.7 percent.

Trump's Trade War Boosts The Economy — Before It Bites

Companies trying to get ahead of damaging tariffs likely propped up the economy in recent months, but the benefit could soon backfire.

By Ben White

Politico, July 26, 2018

President Donald Trump is likely to get one of the best headlines of his presidency on Friday with a highly tweetable report expected to show the U.S. economy grew at its fastest rate in years in the second quarter.

But the big number risks becoming fool's gold.

Economists warn that Trump's trade war sped up U.S. exports in the second quarter as China and other countries rushed to snap up American soybeans and other products ahead of impending tariffs, lifting growth in ways likely to be reversed in the coming months.

And as Trump continues to argue that the strong economy and stock market offer him leeway to press his aggressive approach, his trade battles could wind up slowing an economy that is among the GOP's strongest selling points to voters.

"We are going to see a spike in growth in the second quarter that's in part related to front-loaded soybeans and other exports and that's going to be paid back in the next quarter," said Eric Winograd, senior U.S. economist at Alliance-Bernstein.

Wall Street's concern over potential trade wars was on display Wednesday as shares spiked on initial reports of a deal between the U.S. and the E.U. to avoid Trump's threatened 20 percent tariffs on all imported automobiles and auto parts.

When Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker emerged into the Rose Garden it turned out they had only agreed to further talks. The threat of auto tariffs remains, though it's reduced for the moment.

Economists across Wall Street expect the second quarter growth number, out Friday at 8:30 a.m., to be a blockbuster. Estimates range from around 4 percent to well over 5 percent, which could exceed the second quarter of 2014, when the economy grew 5.2 percent, the top rate of President Barack Obama's tenure.

Even subtracting the impact of increased exports ahead of tariffs, the number is likely to be 3 percent or better following a round of tax cuts and increased federal spending.

But a figure of five percent or better is not likely to be repeated, many analysts say, meaning Trump could face the same thing that happened to Obama, a burst of growth followed by a fizzle.

"Trade and inventories together are contributing around 2.2 percent to headline GDP — nearly half of the growth we are estimating," Morgan Stanley analysts wrote in a note to clients this week. "We find evidence that the hefty contributions from these two categories is likely a reflection of stockpiling ahead of the implementation of trade tariffs, and so they are likely to subtract from growth in the following quarters."

Morgan Stanley and other big banks and forecasters suggest the real second quarter growth rate will be closer to 2.5 percent, returning to a good-but-not-great pace in the second half of the year. Next year could be slower as the impact of tax cuts and increased government spending begin to wane and the Federal Reserve continues to hike interest rates.

Things could get worse if tariffs continue to bite U.S. manufacturers and farmers who are already complaining loudly about increased costs and sagging prices for their exports. Concern in the farm belt already led to a proposed $12 billion bailout from the Trump administration.

"The trade war would become significantly more costly if an all-out global trade war erupted and if global equity markets dropped in response," Goldman Sachs analysts wrote. Fitch Ratings this week estimated that a trade war with tariffs on $2 trillion worth of goods could reduce global growth in 2019 from 3.2 percent to 2.8 percent and would knock nearly 1 percentage point off the U.S. growth rate.

Republicans on Capitol Hill — nervous about polls showing Democrats with a growing lead on the generic ballot and Trump's approval dropping in the Midwest — are increasingly pressuring Trump to drop his tariff threats. They were particularly incensed by the farm bailout.

"It's terrible. I mean we are compounding government errors," Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) said on MSNBC. "And the pity of this is the economy is doing so well. The response to our tax reform, to the deregulation that we and the president have pursued jointly has been phenomenally successful. I'm afraid it could really be jeopardized by this downward spiral on trade."

Trump, meanwhile, is encouraging Republicans to have patience with approach, arguing it will win significant concessions from Europe, China and other trading partners and that all the gloom and doom on the economy will never materialize.

"From the standpoint of the United States, we've never done this well," Trump said alongside Juncker on Wednesday, though the U.S. has enjoyed many periods of faster growth than the current one. "But we're going to do a lot better after we do this deal and other deals that we're currently working on."

Economists largely concur that the U.S. is doing well enough to withstand short-term trade dislocations. The stock market thus far has largely shrugged off Trump's approach, selling off only slightly on negative trade news only to quickly recover lost ground.

"Yes, we do have that extra bandwidth right now," said Winograd. "I'd question the idea that you have to rattle the cage on trade but it's best to do it from a position of strength even if you get a modest slowdown as the result."

The nightmare scenario for Republicans — and the U.S. economy — is that Trump sours on his current détente with the E.U, imposes auto tariffs, ratchets up his battle with China and winds up junking NAFTA, all while believing the U.S. economy and markets are strong enough to withstand it all.

Because they might not be.

"The fact that equity markets are near all-time highs and the growth numbers are so strong only encourages all this belligerence," said Jim O'Sullivan of High Frequency Economics. "They could almost do with a good scare from that perspective. Because if trade wars get worse and equity markets wind up tumbling 15 or 20 percent, that's going to feed into confidence numbers and you won't see 3 percent growth continuing, that's for sure."

Wilbur Ross Calls Out Firms For Using Tariffs As 'Excuse' For Firings

By John T. Bennett

CQ Roll Call (DC), July 26, 2018

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross called out U.S. companies that blame President Donald Trump's tariffs after laying off employees, saying they are using the White House's trade policies as an "excuse."

"Look at the actual statistics. A lot more jobs are being created," Ross told pool reporters Thursday on Air Force One. He said the Trump administration's employment data "do not show that employment is being hurt," predicting "very good numbers for the June period."

When it comes to tariffs-affected companies firing employees, Ross said "in many cases that's not the main reason."

The Commerce chief also indicated talks will be accelerated on the unresolved matters in the mini-deal Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced Wednesday.

"That's very hard to judge. Normally trade discussions take months" or more, he said. "We're going to try to do them much faster."

Additionally, Ross said his department will submit its report on auto tariffs to Trump in August.

"In terms of auto tariffs, we've been directed by the president to continue the investigation, get our material together, but not actually implement anything pending the outcome of the negotiation," he said, referring to the process to resolve trade disputes with the EU that was announced Wednesday.

Though many Republican lawmakers have criticized Trump's tariff tussle with U.S. allies and rivals, Ross credited the president's tough policies with making the EU mini-deal possible.

"If we hadn't had steel and aluminum tariffs, we never would have gotten to the point we are now," the secretary said. "This is a real vindication of the president's trade policy."

Report: Chinese Are 'Awed' By Trump's 'Skill As A Strategist And Tactician'

By John Carney

Breitbart, July 26, 2018

Top officials and intellectuals in China are "awed' by President Donald Trump's "skill as a strategist and tactician," according to co-founder and director of the European Council on Foreign Relations Mark Leonard.

Writing in the Financial Times, Leonard reports that on a recent trip to China many of those he spoke to said "that Mr Trump is the US first president for more than 40 years to bash China on three fronts simultaneously: trade, military and ideology."

The Chinese see Trump as rejecting the idea that U.S. leaders should be managing the relative decline of the U.S.

From the FT:

They think Mr Trump feels he is presiding over the relative decline of his great nation. It is not that the current order does not benefit the US. The problem is that it benefits others more in relative terms. To make things worse the US is investing billions of dollars and a fair amount of blood in supporting the very alliances and international institutions that are constraining America and facilitating China's rise.

In Chinese eyes, Mr Trump's response is a form of "creative destruction". He is systematically destroying the existing institutions — from the World Trade Organization and the North American Free Trade Agreement to Nato and the Iran nuclear deal — as a first step towards renegotiating the world order on terms more favourable to Washington. Once the order is destroyed, the Chinese elite believes, Mr Trump will move to stage two: renegotiating America's relationship with other powers. Because the US is still the most powerful country in the world, it will be able to negotiate with other countries from a position of strength if it deals with them one at a time rather than through multilateral institutions that empower the weak at the expense of the strong.

Leonard goes on to say that while China is taking a tough stance in its conflict with the U.S. now, "many Chinese" think that their leaders should rethink the strategy. Instead of confronting the U.S. and seeking to build an anti-U.S. coalition, China should "prepare the ground for a new grand bargain with the US based on Chinese retrenchment."

The Chinese Are Wary Of Donald Trump's Creative Destruction

By Mark Leonard

Financial Times, July 24, 2018

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

China Plans Retaliation For Any Amount Of U.S. Tariffs

Bloomberg News, July 26, 2018

The Chinese government has a plan to retaliate against increases in U.S. tariffs regardless of the volume of goods targeted, according to an official in Beijing.

China is ready to respond to measures from U.S. President Donald Trump whether they involve $16 billion or $200 billion of Chinese imports, the official said Thursday, asking not to be identified.

The comments came as the world's two biggest economies are locked in a trade standoff after imposing tariffs on $34 billion of each other's goods earlier this month. Another $16 billion of trade is likely to be targeted soon.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative has identified an additional $200 billion of Chinese goods and Trump said he is "ready to go" with tariffs on as much as $500 billion, roughly the value of all China's annual exports to the U.S. He has also accused China of manipulating its currency during the yuan's monthlong losing streak.

China's Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng said Thursday that the two sides have had no contact about renewing talks and the U.S. is fueling tensions while putting all the blame on China.

— With assistance by Miao Han, and John Liu

Lighthizer Signals Nafta Negotiations Could Wrap Up Next Month

By Jenny Leonard

Bloomberg News, July 26, 2018

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said it's possible Nafta partners will reach a tentative agreement next month to revamp the 24-year-old pact.

In congressional testimony Thursday in Washington, Lighthizer said the timetable would meet the Mexican objective of having President Enrique Pena Nieto sign a new North American Free Trade Agreement before he leaves office in December.

That's because U.S. trade law requires a three-month period after a deal is reached before the parties can sign it. In other words, if the three countries don't strike a deal until September or even later, the incoming Mexican president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrado, would have to sign off on it after he takes office.

"You're probably looking at having to have some conclusion during the course of August, and my sense is that that's not an unreasonable time frame if everybody wants to get it done," Lighthizer said in testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

But Lighthizer said Canada may be the sticking point in reaching a new deal.

"My hope is that we will before very long have a conclusion with respect to Mexico and that, as a result of that, Canada will come in and begin to compromise," he said. "I don't believe that they've compromised in the same way the United States has or Mexico has."

The Mexican peso reversed an earlier depreciation and advanced during Lighthizer's hearing, while the Canadian dollar trimmed losses and briefly turned positive.

Robert Lighthizer, Trade Rep.: U.S. Closing In On NAFTA Agreement, China A 'Longer-Term Problem'

By David Sherfinski

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Robert E. Lighthizer, the U.S. Trade Representative, on Thursday said it could take some time before the administration achieves its desired goals from an escalating standoff over tariffs with China.

Mr. Lighthizer did express hope that the U.S. is closing in on a deal to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but said China is going to be a "longer-term problem."

"That isn't to say we're going to be in a trade war with China, in my judgment. But I think we have to change the dynamic," Mr. Lighthizer told lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

In response to what the Trump administration has slammed as trade abuses on the part of China, the administration has imposed or threatened to impose tariffs totaling a half-trillion dollars on Chinese goods.

China, in turn, has imposed its own new tariffs on U.S. goods such as milk, soybeans and automobiles.

"The tactics we see now … appear to have gotten China's attention, but more tariffs cannot be the ultimate answer," said Sen. Jerry Moran, Kansas Republican.

The U.S. Agriculture Department announced this week a $12 billion lifeline to farmers who are facing adverse consequences as a result of "trade damage from unjustified retaliation."

Mr. Lighthizer told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee the administration isn't contemplating a similar lifeline "at this time" for other small businesses being hurt by the retaliatory tariffs

On NAFTA, Mr. Lighthizer said the administration has been renegotiating the free-trade deal at "an unprecedented speed."

"Hopefully, we are in the finishing stages of achieving an agreement in principle that will benefit American workers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses," he said.

But the Trump administration has irked Canada, who along with Mexico and U.S. is party to NAFTA, by invoking national security reasons to impose tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum.

Sen. Jack Reed, Rhode Island Democrat, asked Mr. Lighthizer if Canada is a national security threat to the U.S.

"Nobody is declaring war on Canada or saying they're an unfriendly neighbor," Mr. Lighthizer said, calling the country a "great ally."

"But if you decide that you need to protect an industry, you can't be a position where the protection is of no value," he said.

Mr. Lighthizer said he was meeting with Mexican officials Thursday about NAFTA, and that he hoped Canada would come in and compromise if the U.S. and Mexico managed to move the negotiations forward.

Indian Firm Wants Ohio Aluminum Maker. Will Trump Approve?

By Vindu Goel

New York Times, July 26, 2018

MUMBAI, India — Last year, the Trump administration blocked a Chinese company from buying an Ohio-based aluminum maker, Aleris, citing concerns about national security.

Will President Trump and his advisers feel differently about an Indian company purchasing Aleris instead?

On Thursday, one of India's biggest industrial conglomerates, the Aditya Birla Group, announced that its aluminum and copper subsidiary had struck a deal to buy Aleris for $2.6 billion, including the assumption of existing debt.

The transaction would make the Birla subsidiary, called Hindalco, the second-largest aluminum producer in the world by volume, after China Hongqiao Group.

Under federal rules, the deal must be approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, a secretive panel of government officials that advises the president on whether to stop acquisitions of American companies by foreigners.

In recent years, the panel, known as Cfius, has been particularly skeptical of Chinese companies seeking to buy American businesses in important industries like computer chips and financial services.

Last summer, Cfius refused to sign off on a proposed $2.3 billion purchase of Aleris by a company controlled by the Chinese metals magnate Liu Zhongtian. That effectively killed the deal and pushed Aleris's investors — principally Oaktree Capital Management, Apollo Global Management and Bain Capital — to find another buyer.

The Indian transaction could be one of the first reviewed under a new law, expected to be passed by Congress soon, to broaden the powers of Cfius.

Hindalco executives said they did not anticipate running into the same difficulties that the Chinese buyer encountered.

But Kumar Mangalam Birla, who leads the Aditya Birla Group, noted that Mr. Trump is unpredictable.

"We don't know how he thinks," Mr. Birla said at a news conference in Mumbai, where his company has its headquarters.

The Trump administration has been trying to build a stronger relationship with India as a counterweight to China. At the same time, trade tensions have been rising.

Mr. Trump has lashed out at India's high tariffs on products like Harley-Davidson motorcycles. His recent imposition of tariffs on imported steel and aluminum has hurt Indian producers, prompting India to respond with higher tariffs on American almonds, apples, shrimp, and iron and steel products.

Hindalco already has a large American subsidiary, Novelis, that is based in Atlanta and will merge with Aleris.

Novelis dominates the aluminum can business and is a major supplier to the auto industry. Aleris, which is based in suburban Cleveland, would bring strong positions in aluminum for buildings and airplanes and a newly expanded factory in Lewisport, Ky., that serves automakers.

"We're investing in the U.S.," Devinder Ahuja, the chief financial officer of Novelis, said in an interview. "We're creating jobs in the U.S. That's what the U.S. administration wants."

Mr. Ahuja said that Novelis would continue with Aleris's previously announced expansion plans and did not envision layoffs beyond areas of clear duplication like top management and the corporate back office.

Hindalco also intends to bring some of Aleris's advanced technology back to India to improve its domestic operations and better serve the local auto and construction markets.

By owning an American aluminum maker like Aleris, Hindalco would benefit from Mr. Trump's 10 percent tariff on aluminum imports, although Aleris also has operations in Europe and China that could suffer if current tensions devolve into a full-scale trade war.

Trump Administration Sets Sights On Libya's Oil Reserves In Behind-the-scenes Power Play

By Dan Boylan

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

Iran's loss may be Libya's gain. The prospect that U.S. sanctions will drastically curb Tehran's oil exports is feeding

interest in Libya's oil reserves and has even sparked movement toward economic and political reform in one of the region's most unstable states.

As Libya endured yet another oil blockade, which pulled nearly 850,000 barrels per day from the world's markets, Trump administration officials worked behind the scenes over the past month to pressure key militia leaders, government officials and oil executives to cooperate or face dire consequences, multiple sources told The Washington Times.

State Department and White House officials declined to comment on specifics, underscoring the sensitivities required to execute a successful power play in Libya.

The country is plagued by Islamist radical threats and divided between rival governments in its eastern and western halves since the 2011 revolution and death of longtime strongman Moammar Gadhafi.

With the U.N. and European allies, the U.S. has pushed a deal to subject the Central Bank of Libya and the state oil company to a wide-ranging investigation into long-standing reports of corruption and misappropriation of oil revenue by radical Islamist factions and militia groups.

Regional analysts have welcomed the investigation as a glimmer of hope after a long record of failure and uncertainty for U.S. policy.

"The proposed Central Bank audit presents an opportunity to improve transparency and management of a critical economic institution," said Lydia Jabs of the U.S.-Libya Business Association.

International Crisis Group senior Libya analyst Claudia Gazzini voiced cautious optimism but warned that major questions remain about who will conduct the audit and how its findings are handled.

"The devil will be in the details," she said by phone from neighboring Tunisia. "But forging a real agreement for a genuine investigation, if properly managed, it could lead to a great opening-up."

Factional fighting

The factions that control Libya's west and east — one based in Tripoli and one in Tobruk — have battled for years for control of the largest oil reserves in Africa and 10th largest in the world.

On June 14, four ports in what is known as Libya's Oil Crescent in the east were seized from Gen. Khalifa Haftar, the strongman who controls the Libyan National Army and much of the eastern half of the country.

Called stubborn and at times self-serving, the 75-year-old Gen. Haftar falls in and out of favor in Washington, where he has become well-known since defecting to the U.S. from Gadhafi's army in the 1980s. Gen. Haftar returned to fight in the revolution in 2011 and later battled Benghazi's Islamist militias.

Gen. Haftar's troops soon recaptured the ports but refused to return them to the state-owned National Oil Corp., a move condemned by France, Italy, Britain and the U.S.

The Libyan standoff, combined with uncertainty over the future of Iran's energy markets after the U.S. pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal, helped push U.S. gas prices by July 4 to their highest levels in four years.

The Libya 218 TV channel reported July 10 that President Trump sent a message to Gen. Haftar and the heads of the rival governing factions, Aqilah Saleh and Fayez Al-Sirraj, threatening them with major sanctions — and possible U.S. force — if they did not immediately restore Libyan oil to the world market.

The next day, July 11, Libyan media reported that the National Oil Corp. had control of the four Hafta ports and the blockade was over.

National Oil Corp. Chairman Mustafa Sanallah, whom analysts see as a reformer, said the incident illustrated that "a proper national debate on the fair distribution of oil revenues" was direly needed.

"The real solution is transparency" he said.

Shortly afterward, Ghassan Salame, the U.N. envoy to Libya, then secured support from the U.S. and European allies to launch an anti-corruption investigation that many in Libya see as key to restoring a semblance of efficient government in the chaotic post-Gadhafi era.

"If these matters are not expeditiously addressed, I fear the agreements made to resume the production of oil will not hold, and it will be difficult to advance the political process," Mr. Salame told the U.N. Security Council last week. "If there has been a silver lining in the events, it is that the various authorities in Libya now accept that they need to take action to protect the country's wealth."

Speaking on background for fear of reprisal in Libya, one official of a nongovernmental organization said Libyans were divided about the pressure the U.S. and outside players have applied, which ultimately could lead to greater transparency.

"Wrong reasons, good results," the source said. "Iran is the White House's priority, not Libya. [The U.S.] wants to make sure that there's a healthy supply of Libyan oil on the world market when the new Iran sanctions kick in so U.S. oil prices don't skyrocket."

Libya's oil industry drives 95 percent of the country's exports, and corruption is endemic. Last year, Transparency International ranked Libya 171st out of 180 nations in its annual Corruption Perceptions Index.

Human trafficking is another massive problem. Organized crime syndicates in the major Mediterranean ports use their oil smuggling routes to make Libya the prime departure point for moving economic refugees to Europe, fueling an immigration crisis that has badly divided the European Union.

According to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, 124,711 people crossed from Libya to Europe from January 2017 to March 2018, and 4,578 refugees were declared dead or missing at sea last year.

Vincent Cochetel, the UNHCR special envoy for the Central Mediterranean, has called for "naming and shaming" traffickers and smugglers and freezing their assets.

In February, the U.S. Treasury's office of foreign assets control did just that, sanctioning six specific smugglers from Libya, Malta and Egypt in addition to 24 companies and seven vessels.

International investors have taken notice.

Last week, the Texas-based Guidry Group announced plans for a $1 billion redevelopment of a deep-water port near the strategic northeastern city of Susah, where tradition holds that Roman Gen. Marc Antony reportedly built Cleopatra a swimming pool.

Founder Michael Guidry said in a phone interview from Benghazi that he had been to Libya more than a dozen times since 2012, when he began pitching officials to rebuild the Susah port. The former specialist in kidnapping and ransom negotiations and security services said his firm has evolved into developing critical infrastructure for war-torn countries.

Despite the difficulties and dangers, Mr. Guidry said, the Susah port project has attracted serious American investors and the interests of a major global port operator.

"The Libyans told me they had a dream of building a deep-sea port," he said. "This is it. They have been through so much, they need their dreams to start becoming real."

House OKs Defense Bill Authorizing A Pay Raise For Troops, New Hardware And Military Parade

By Michael Collins

USA Today, July 26, 2018

Troops will get a pay raise, the armed forces will get lots of new hardware, and President Donald Trump will get his military parade.

The House voted 359-54 on Thursday to approve a $717 billion defense package that adds 15,600 active duty personal to the ranks of the military and authorizes spending on various military programs. The bill is a compromise that resulted from negotiations between the House and the Senate, which had passed different versions of the legislation.

The compromise now heads to the Senate, which is expected give final approval to the bill next week.

"This bill takes a major step forward in rebuilding our military, reforming the Pentagon" and preparing the country for the challenges ahead, said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

The legislation, known as the National Defense Authorization Act, doesn't actually provide money for the military but sets defense policy and serves as a blueprint for federal spending on various military programs. Funding will be determined later by congressional appropriators.

Under the bill, the men and women in uniform will receive a 2.6 percent pay raise, their largest increase in nine years, and special pay and bonuses for those in high-demand fields will be extended.

To improve military readiness, the legislation authorizes $17.7 billion to replace worn-out Army equipment and approves new military hardware, including 77 F-35 Joint Strike fighters and 13 new warships. It also supports the Trump administration's push for the development of low-yield nuclear warheads.

Trump's proposal for a military parade in Washington this fall to honor the men and women in uniform is endorsed by the legislation, but with a caveat.

In an earlier version, the House inserted language barring the use of operational units or equipment in the parade if their participation would hamper military readiness. House and Senate negotiators kept that language in the final bill.

One of the most controversial provisions was stricken from the final package. The Senate added language to its version of the bill that would block the Trump administration's plan to save the Chinese telecom ZTE.

Administration officials announced in June they would lift a crippling ban on U.S. companies doing business with ZTE and instead impose a $1 billion penalty on the firm. The ban had been put in place in retaliation for ZTE violating U.S. sanctions against exporting to Iran and North Korea. Trump moved to lift the ban and impose the penalty instead after a personal request from Chinese President Xi Jinping.

A bipartisan group of senators who labeled ZTE a threat to national security inserted language in the Senate version blocking the deal. But that language was stripped during negotiations with the House.

The final package does, however, ban Chinese companies like ZTE and Huawei from doing business with the U.S. government or any entity that does business with the government.

In addition, the compromise retains language that bars "military-to-military" cooperation with Russia. The prohibition comes on the heels of overtures by Moscow for increased military cooperation following Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week in Helsinki.

The bill also prohibits the U.S. from recognizing Russia's annexation of Crimea.

House Passes Annual Defense Bill, Avoiding Big Policy Clashes With Trump

By Karen Demirjian

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

The House on Thursday overwhelmingly passed the final version of the annual defense authorization bill, giving its approval to a record-setting military budget and changes to policies on Russia and China that nonetheless avoids direct clashes with the Trump administration.

The 359-to-54 vote on the $716 billion measure, which the Senate is expected to take up late next week, comes after one of the shortest negotiation processes for the behemoth defense bill in recent history — an indicator of how few politically controversial issues arose during the debate.

House and Senate lawmakers decided to avoid angering the Trump administration with a provision that would have effectively undone a deal the president recently struck to lift certain penalties againstChinese telecom giant ZTE, imposed because the firm sold products to Iran and North Korea.

Instead of reimposing sanctions on the company — a move that officials say would have put it out of business — lawmakers included a less heavy-handed restriction preventing the federal government from buying any products made by ZTE and Huawei, another Chinese telecom company that both Democrats and Republicans believe poses a national security risk.

Lawmakers also accommodated a request from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to give the administration the power to waive certain Russia-related sanctions to sell defense materials to countries that have been dependent on Russian systems, in an effort to better court those countries into closer defense alliances with the West.

Republicans in Congress argued that the change was necessary to better achieve the objectives of isolating Russia. But the timing prompted a sharp backlash from Democrats, who questioned why sanctions against Russia were being eased at all at a time when members from both sides of the aisle were clamoring for more stringent punitive measures against the Kremlin.

Bipartisan pairs of lawmakers have raised various proposals to stiffen sanctions against Russia following President Trump's summit with Russian President Vladi-mir Putin, which drew criticism from members of Congress. On Wednesday, both Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee laid into Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for not being more forthcoming with the details of what exactly Trump agreed to during his meeting with Putin — or to allay their concerns that the White House was simply "making it up as they go" on foreign policy.

House Democratic leaders defended the changes to Russia and China policy in the bill as significant.

"This bill does step up to confront our adversaries in Russia and China," Rep. Adam Smith (Wash.), the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, said on the floor Thursday.

Among those measures are updated authorities for the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, or CFIUS, that some lawmakers have argued will be vital for blocking transactions with companies, including Chinese corporations, that pose national security risks to the country. The bill also includes a prohibition on China's participation in joint naval exercises in the Pacific rim.

Lawmakers also decided to include in the legislation a reaffirmation of the United States' commitment to NATO and increasing the defense capabilities of European allies. The measure creates a new position on the National Security Council dedicated to countering Russian efforts to influence elections.

The measure includes money for 77 new Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, 13 new battle ships, and a 2.6 percent pay raise for all members of the armed forces. It limits the sale or transfer of F-35s to Turkey, until a report is completed assessing whether Turkey should be eliminated from participation in the F-35 program entirely.

Shadow Of A Role: John Kelly's 1-year Mark Approaches

By Kevin Liptak, Jeff Zeleny, Kaitlan Collins And Jeremy Diamond

CNN, July 26, 2018

John Kelly is on the cusp of a milestone: surviving one year as chief of staff to President Donald Trump. The job comes with the luxury of the second-best piece of real estate in the West Wing, but the biggest headaches.

But as Kelly on Saturday marks his one-year anniversary, the retired Marine Corps general is now just a shadow of the chief of staff who roamed the West Wing with sweeping authority at the start of his tenure.

Many of the protocols and processes he put in place to organize policymaking and rein in freewheeling access to the President have broken down. He no longer commands the same respect he once enjoyed from White House staff or the President.

And other aides – notably new communications chief Bill Shine – have assumed new stature as Trump increasingly looks to surround himself with a different set of voices.

As his influence and standing with the President have waned, Kelly's future has been the subject of intense speculation for months, with aides split on whether Kelly will depart before or after the fall elections. In the two weeks leading up to Trump's disruptive swing through Europe, senior aides predicted that Kelly had days or hours left. Those same aides now think the ensuing chaos may have helped Kelly hang on a little longer.

Kelly has held increasingly fewer senior staff meetings – once daily occurrences which have been whittled down to weekly gatherings – and has exerted less control over who talks to Trump, as well as how and when outsiders connect with the President.

Trump himself has not given Kelly a timeline for leaving and has told people it will be up to Kelly to set a departure date. But the question across the White House is less will Kelly leave, but when.

Lately, Trump has fluctuated between venting about Kelly to certain aides while reassuring others that he is pleased with him. He went on a profanity-laced tirade against his chief of staff in recent weeks, according to a source who heard the conversation told CNN, but the next day he was telling others Kelly was doing a fine job.

"It's no longer a question of the President blowing up and firing Kelly – that would have happened already," one senior White House official said. "The status quo seems fine with the President, until he can find someone to replace him."

In conversations this week with more than 20 administration officials and people who talk to the White House on a regular basis, a portrait of a diminished Kelly emerges. He has little direct role in two of the biggest subjects hanging over the White House: the midterm elections and the Russia investigation.

The White House and Kelly declined CNN requests for comment.

White House insists Kelly isn't going anywhere, but it's a familiar refrain

A year after taking the job, Kelly often leaves his Manassas, Virginia, home later in the morning than he once did and occasionally arrives home earlier. His Secret Service detail has been spotted outside the White House gym during the lunchtime hour as Kelly takes a break from the office to work out.

Kelly still travels regularly with the President, including sometimes on Trump's weekend visits to his golf resort in New Jersey. He was spotted there one July weekend, dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, mounting an orange ladder to help extract an enormous American flag that had become entangled in wire.

With every passing month, officials say, Kelly has spent less and less private time with the President. And at least some days, Kelly sees Trump no more than some mid-level aides and far less than new advisers like Shine, the former Fox News executive who is at the President's side more than anyone.

When Trump was jetting home last week from Helsinki, the site of his maligned summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, it was Shine at the head of the table in Air Force One's conference room managing discussions of how to triage the disaster. Kelly sat to his left.

"(Trump) doesn't want someone telling him what to do," one White House official said. "He wants someone to make him look good doing it."

That task has increasingly fallen to Shine, who has begun applying his knowledge of camera angles and lighting to Trump's events. After the President complained about the television lighting during speeches, suggesting it made his hair glow, Shine worked with aides to develop alternate set-ups. He also recently had aides install neutral-density filters on two windows in the Cabinet Room in order to modify the sunlight ahead of a video recording.

Unlike Kelly, who worked swiftly to impose changes when he entered the job a year ago, Shine has been more watchful. Some officials said he viewed Kelly's approach, which aggravated the President, as a cautionary tale.

If Kelly entered the West Wing with an iron fist, one official in the West Wing noted, Shine has taken the opposite approach, quietly observing the power structure first. But multiple sources close to Shine say there is no doubt he will make his mark when he feels the time has come. Shine's presence has already irritated some officials, such as Kellyanne Conway, who was once encouraged to take on a similar communications role.

The President doesn't hold animosity toward Kelly in the way he has for several other aides he has fired, several officials said, but he is often not at the center of the West Wing activity. In conversations with friends, Trump has praised Kelly's military background but noted that because he spent most of his career in the ranks of the Marine Corps, he has little sense of the political world. Himself a newcomer to politics, Trump has regularly questioned the political instincts of his senior-most aides, believing his own intuition surpasses that of seasoned operatives.

A person close to Kelly said the retired Marine general has no plans of stepping down until the President asks him to do so. Asked whether he still enjoys the job, this person, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "I'm not sure he ever did."

Whether Kelly has ultimately been successful bringing order and discipline to an extraordinarily chaotic White House is an open question, but his firm grip has left an unmistakable mark: He saw to it that Omarosa Manigault, the former reality star who entered the White House as a top-level adviser, and other aides viewed as problematic were removed.

His tenure has nevertheless been pocked with controversies, all of which he managed to survive. Weeks after taking over for Reince Priebus, his predecessor who was unceremoniously fired over Twitter while he sat on a rainy tarmac, Kelly was faced with the Charlottesville controversy. He was photographed looking grim-faced in the lobby of Trump Tower as the President declared there were "good people" on both sides of the racist violence.

Since then he's created some of his own dust-ups. He insulted Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Florida, using inaccurate information, later declaring he would "never" apologize. He declared some of those eligible for DACA protections "lazy." He was quoted by NBC News calling the President an "idiot," an accusation the White House vehemently denied, and a senior administration official later told CNN that Kelly had also privately called Trump "unhinged."

Perhaps most damaging, he woefully bungled the situation involving former staff secretary Rob Porter, who was accused by two of his ex-wives of abuse. Kelly's shifting accounts of the matter after the fact caused his credibility inside the West Wing to plummet, and it never truly recovered, according to officials. Kelly's highly criticized handling of the Porter controversy was an inflection point in his tenure, and some of his internal relationships became strained in the months that followed the former staff secretary's ouster.

That included Kelly's ties to members of Trump's family, who saw him as attempting to limit their access to the President. When he started in the job, senior advisers Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump made sure to announce publicly they would report to Kelly, and not directly to the President, who is Ivanka's father. Over the course of the year, however, the arrangement soured.

"They have the worst working relationship I have ever seen," an administration official said of the dynamic between Kelly and Ivanka Trump.

"John last lost the (Trump) family and John has lost the staff," another source close to the White House said.

One source close to the President said Trump has complained about Kelly's manner in clashing with other aides, calling him a "hothead."

"He uses all the terms that would equivocate that he's done with the guy," the source said.

Kelly still doesn't read Twitter unless shown one of the President's messages. And he still doesn't watch cable television in his office, gazing instead on the Abraham Lincoln portrait he hung in place of the large TV screen above his fireplace.

It's not clear how Kelly's eventual departure – whether it comes in a matter of days, weeks, or months – might affect the structure he sought to impose. In recent weeks, Trump has told confidants he misses the chaos of the early days of his administration, which mirrored his style as a real estate impresario with its large cast of advisers and competing internal factions.

Still, Trump has looked to two experienced political hands as possible Kelly successors, polling friends and advisers about the possibility of tapping Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney or Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff Nick Ayers to take the reins. Mulvaney, whose sharp wit has impressed Trump, is seen as the strongest candidate, three sources inside the West Wing told CNN, though Trump has remarked that he likes Ayers' hair.

Yet there remains no obvious successor for Kelly, which is why many believe Trump has not replaced him yet. Even as Trump is mulling Kelly's successor, one Republican close to the White House stressed that Trump was not looking to replace Kelly imminently.

"The President polls people on everybody. He does that constantly," the Republican said. "It has nothing to do with job openings ... He's constantly taking a check on different people."

Kelly has raised eyebrows in the White House press and communications offices by occasionally tapping Zack Fuentes, his deputy, to handle some media issues related to himself. For example, Fuentes spoke on the record to some media outlets when, in late April, the chief of staff became the target of an explosive leak after NBC published allegations that Kelly had called Trump an "idiot" behind closed doors – a claim Fuentes rushed to deny.

In the Rose Garden on Wednesday, as Trump made an announcement on tariffs, Kelly stood to the side, well out of camera view, and took in the scene. When the President finished speaking, ignoring shouted questions, Kelly followed him into the Oval Office.

Trump Hits Media Over Russia Coverage: 'They're Dying To See Us Make A Little Bit Of A Mistake'

By Jordan Fabian

The Hill, July 26, 2018

President Trump on Thursday mocked the news media for scrutinizing his stance toward Russia, claiming reporters are "dying to see us make a little bit of a mistake."

"They analyze every word. They say, 'Did he say that?' Could it have been? Did he say something positive about Russia? I think he loves Russia,'" the president said, imitating a member of the media.

The president also claimed that television cameras didn't follow former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush the same way they follow him.

"Look at all these cameras. Every stop, I get all these cameras. This never happened to Obama. This never happened to Bush. This never happened," he said.

Many news organizations covered those presidents on domestic travel and foreign trips.

Trump was speaking at a U.S. Steel facility in southern Illinois, where he made the case his steel and aluminum tariffs are helping American workers.

The president has repeatedly voiced his frustration over media coverage of his meeting with Russian President

Vladimir Putin, where he failed to publicly condemn the Russian leader for interfering in the 2016 election.

Mueller Examining Trump's Tweets In Wide-Ranging Obstruction Inquiry

By Michael S. Schmidt And Maggie Haberman
New York Times, July 26, 2018

For years, President Trump has used Twitter as his go-to public relations weapon, mounting a barrage of attacks on celebrities and then political rivals even after advisers warned he could be creating legal problems for himself.

Those concerns now turn out to be well founded. The special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, is scrutinizing tweets and negative statements from the president about Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the former F.B.I. director James B. Comey, according to three people briefed on the matter.

Several of the remarks came as Mr. Trump was also privately pressuring the men — both key witnesses in the inquiry — about the investigation, and Mr. Mueller is examining whether the actions add up to attempts to obstruct the investigation by both intimidating witnesses and pressuring senior law enforcement officials to tamp down the inquiry.

Mr. Mueller wants to question the president about the tweets. His interest in them is the latest addition to a range of presidential actions he is investigating as a possible obstruction case: private interactions with Mr. Comey, Mr. Sessions and other senior administration officials about the Russia inquiry; misleading White House statements; public attacks; and possible pardon offers to potential witnesses.

None of what Mr. Mueller has homed in on constitutes obstruction, Mr. Trump's lawyers said. They argued that most of the presidential acts under scrutiny, including the firing of Mr. Comey, fall under Mr. Trump's authority as the head of the executive branch and insisted that he should not even have to answer Mr. Mueller's questions about obstruction.

But privately, some of the lawyers have expressed concern that Mr. Mueller will stitch together several episodes, encounters and pieces of evidence, like the tweets, to build a case that the president embarked on a broad effort to interfere with the investigation. Prosecutors who lack one slam-dunk piece of evidence in obstruction cases often search for a larger pattern of behavior, legal experts said.

The special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, is scrutinizing some of President Trump's Twitter posts and public statements.

The special counsel's investigators have told Mr. Trump's lawyers they are examining the tweets under a wide-ranging obstruction-of-justice law beefed up after the Enron accounting scandal, according to the three people. The investigators did not explicitly say they were examining possible witness tampering, but the nature of the questions they want to ask the president, and the fact that they are scrutinizing his actions under a section of the United States Code titled "Tampering With a Witness, Victim, or an Informant," raised concerns for his lawyers about Mr. Trump's exposure in the investigation.

A spokesman for Mr. Mueller's office declined to comment.

Mr. Trump's lead lawyer in the case, Rudolph W. Giuliani, dismissed Mr. Mueller's interest in the tweets as part of a desperate quest to sink the president.

"If you're going to obstruct justice, you do it quietly and secretly, not in public," Mr. Giuliani said.

Mr. Giuliani was referring to more typical obstruction cases, where prosecutors focus on measures taken in private, like bribing witnesses, destroying evidence or lying under oath. While some of Mr. Trump's private acts are under scrutiny, like asking Mr. Comey for loyalty, his public conduct is as well. That sets this investigation apart, even from those of other presidents; Richard M. Nixon and Bill Clinton were accused of privately trying to influence witness testimony.

But as in those cases, federal investigators are seeking to determine whether Mr. Trump was trying to use his power to punish anyone who did not go along with his attempts to curtail the investigation.

If Mr. Mueller opts to tailor a narrative that the president tried to obstruct the Russia investigation, he would have to clear several hurdles to make a strong case. He would need credible witnesses (Mr. Comey and Mr. Sessions have been the target of concerted attacks by Mr. Trump and allies, undercutting their standing) and evidence that Mr. Trump had criminal intent (the special counsel has told the president's lawyers he needs to question him to determine this).

"There's rarely evidence that someone sits down and says, 'I intend to commit a crime,' so any type of investigation hangs on using additional evidence to build a narrative arc that hangs together," said Samuel W. Buell, a professor of law at Duke University and former senior federal prosecutor. "That's why a prosecutor wants more pieces of evidence. You need to lock down the argument."

It is not clear what Mr. Mueller will do if he concludes he has enough evidence to prove that Mr. Trump committed a crime. He has told the president's lawyers that he will follow Nixon- and Clinton-era Justice Department memos that concluded that a sitting president cannot be indicted, Mr. Giuliani has said. If Mr. Mueller does not plan to make a case in court, a report of his findings could be sent to Congress, leaving it to lawmakers to decide whether to begin impeachment proceedings.

Investigators want to ask Mr. Trump about the tweets he wrote about Mr. Sessions and Mr. Comey and why he has continued to publicly criticize Mr. Comey and the former deputy F.B.I. director Andrew G. McCabe, another witness against the president. They also want to know about a

January episode in the Oval Office in which Mr. Trump asked the White House counsel, Donald F. McGahn II, about reports that Mr. McGahn told investigators about the president's efforts to fire Mr. Mueller himself last year.

Mr. Trump has navigated the investigation with a mix of public and private cajoling of witnesses.

Around the time he said publicly last summer that he would have chosen another attorney general had he known Mr. Sessions was going to recuse himself from the Russia investigation, Mr. Trump tried behind closed doors to persuade Mr. Sessions to reverse that decision. The special counsel's investigators have also learned that Mr. Trump wanted Mr. Sessions to resign at varying points in May and July 2017 so he could replace him with a loyalist to oversee the Russia investigation.

After Mr. Trump tried last July to get Mr. Sessions to resign, the president began a three-day public attack on a variety of fronts — tweets, a Rose Garden news conference and a Wall Street Journal interview — criticizing Mr. Sessions, raising the specter that he would fire him.

A day later, Mr. Trump doubled down, criticizing both Mr. Sessions again and Mr. McCabe, who was the acting F.B.I. director at the time.

Similarly, Mr. Trump's relationship with Mr. Comey was strained from the start by the president's encroachment on the typically independent Justice Department. In late March of 2017, the president asked Mr. Comey to put out word that he was not under investigation. Mr. Comey demurred, and when the president called about two weeks later to ask again, Mr. Comey responded that he had passed along the proposal to the Justice Department, he later testified.

That request having gone nowhere, Mr. Trump issued an indirect threat the next day about Mr. Comey's job. "It's not too late" to ask him to step down as F.B.I. director, he said in an interview with Maria Bartiromo on Fox Business Network. The special counsel wants to ask the president what he meant by that remark.

A few weeks later, in early May, an aide to Mr. Sessions sought derogatory information about the F.B.I. director. Mr. Sessions, his aide told a Capitol Hill staff member, wanted one negative article a day in the news media about Mr. Comey, a person familiar with the meeting has said.

Four days later, Mr. Trump fired Mr. Comey, citing at first his management of the investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server to handle classified information.

By the fall, Mr. Comey had become a chief witness against the president in the special counsel investigation, and Mr. Trump's ire toward him was well established. His personal attacks evolved into attacks on Mr. Comey's work, publicly calling on the Justice Department to examine his handling of the Clinton inquiry — and drawing the special counsel's interest.

Mr. Mueller's deputies told Mr. Trump's lawyers they also wanted to question the president about similar statements at the time by the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

"The Department of Justice has to look into any allegations of whether or not something is illegal or not," Ms. Sanders said at a press briefing last September. "That's not up to me to decide. What I've said and what I'm talking about are facts. James Comey — leaking of information, questionable statements under oath, politicizing an investigation — those are real reasons for why he was fired."

Mr. Trump's lawyers have pushed back against the special counsel about the tweets, saying the president is a politician under 24-hour attack and is within his rights to defend himself using social media or any other means.

The president continues to wield his Twitter account to pummel witnesses and the investigation itself, ignoring any legal concerns or accusations of witness intimidation. This week, he moved to strip the security clearances of six former senior national security officials, including Mr. Comey, Mr. McCabe and some of his most outspoken critics. And he tweeted false claims about the Russia investigation.

Cohen Claims Trump Knew In Advance Of 2016 Trump Tower Meeting

By Jim Sciutto, Carl Bernstein And Marshall Cohen
CNN, July 26, 2018

Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former personal attorney, claims that then-candidate Trump knew in advance about the June 2016 meeting in Trump Tower in which Russians were expected to offer his campaign dirt on Hillary Clinton, sources with knowledge tell CNN. Cohen is willing to make that assertion to special counsel Robert Mueller, the sources said.

Cohen's claim would contradict repeated denials by Trump, Donald Trump Jr., their lawyers and other administration officials who have said that the President knew nothing about the Trump Tower meeting until he was approached about it by The New York Times in July 2017.

Cohen alleges that he was present, along with several others, when Trump was informed of the Russians' offer by Trump Jr. By Cohen's account, Trump approved going ahead with the meeting with the Russians, according to sources.

To be clear, these sources said Cohen does not have evidence, such as audio recordings, to corroborate his claim, but he is willing to attest to his account.

Cohen privately testified last year to two Congressional committees investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election. A source familiar with Cohen's House testimony said he did not testify that Trump had advance knowledge. Cohen's claims weren't mentioned in separate reports issued

by Republicans and Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee.

Contacted by CNN, one of Cohen's attorneys, Lanny Davis, declined to comment.

"He's been lying all week, he's been lying for years," said Rudy Giuliani, the President's attorney, to Chris Cuomo on CNN's "Cuomo Prime Time" on Thursday night.

He added, "I don't see how he's got any credibility."

Giuliani also said Cohen is "the kind of witness that can really destroy your whole case" and called Cohen, who was a top Trump Organization attorney for a decade, a "pathological liar."

"Donald Trump Jr. has been professional and responsible throughout the Mueller and Congressional investigations," said Alan Futerfas, an attorney for Donald Trump Jr. "We are very confident of the accuracy and reliability of the information that has been provided by Mr. Trump, Jr., and on his behalf."

According to people who have discussed the matter with Cohen, he has expressed hope that this claim about the Trump Tower meeting will help him reach out to Mueller and possibly lessen his legal troubles. He's under scrutiny by federal prosecutors in Manhattan after Mueller referred Cohen's case to them.

The June 2016 meeting was arranged after a publicist who knew Trump Jr. told him in emails – in no uncertain terms – that a senior Russian official "offered to provide the Trump campaign" with damaging information about Clinton, and that the outreach was "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." At the time, the Russian operation to covertly boost Trump's candidacy wasn't publicly known. Trump. Jr. responded, "if it's what you say, I love it," and started to arrange the meeting.

At the meeting, Trump Jr. was joined by his brother-in-law Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort, who was Trump's campaign chairman at the time. There were four Russians in the room, including a lawyer with Kremlin ties, a businessman who worked for an oligarch and a lobbyist with old KGB connections.

After news of the meeting broke in July 2017, the Trump team offered misleading explanations and changed their story several times. But one claim stayed consistent: that Trump had no knowledge of the meeting beforehand, wasn't told about it afterward and first learned about it one year later.

Those denials were repeatedly issued by Trump, his attorney Jay Sekulow, Trump Jr., Futerfas and White House press secretary Sarah Sanders. Those people denied that Trump had contemporaneous knowledge of the meeting on more than 15 occasions, according to CNN's analysis.

Trump said on July 12, 2017, that he "only heard about it two or three days ago." One week later, Trump repeated that he "didn't know anything about the meeting" because "nobody told me" about it.

Around that same time, CNN's Jake Tapper asked Sekulow to confirm Trump's claims that he only recently learned about the controversial meeting. Sekulow's response: "Yes, I swear."

But perhaps the highest-stakes denial was given by Trump Jr. in his testimony last year to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"He wasn't aware of it," Trump Jr. told lawmakers, referring to his father's knowledge of the meeting. "And, frankly, by the time anyone was aware of it, which was summer of this year, as I stated earlier, I wouldn't have wanted to get him involved in it because it had nothing to do with him."

Trump's critics have long doubted these denials. They point to a series of phone calls Trump Jr. made to a blocked phone number before and after the meeting. They also note that two days before the meeting, Trump mysteriously announced plans to give a "major speech" about Clinton's scandals. Trump Jr. says he didn't get any dirt at the meeting – and the speech never happened.

Even Steve Bannon, the former White House chief strategist and top Trump campaign official, said the meeting was "treasonous" and speculated that "the chance that Don Jr. did not walk these (Russians) up to his father's office on the twenty-sixth floor is zero." Trump Jr. has denied Bannon's allegation. Bannon's comments, to author Michael Wolff for his book "Fire and Fury," triggered the bitter public divorce between Bannon and Trump in early 2018.

Axios reported that Bannon does not have first-hand knowledge about whether Trump Jr. told his father, and Bannon later said his "treasonous" remark was directed at Manafort and not Trump Jr.

Secret Tape May Not Add To Legal Jeopardy For Trump Or Cohen

By Eric Tucker

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

A secret recording of Donald Trump discussing payments to a Playboy model has brought renewed attention to the question of whether — and how — he might have blocked politically damaging stories ahead of the 2016 presidential election. But it's not clear that the tape, on its own, creates additional legal problems for the president.

The September 2016 conversation between Trump and his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen, took place weeks after the National Enquirer's parent company reached a $150,000 deal to pay former Playboy model Karen McDougal for her story of a 2006 affair she says she had with Trump. The recording captures Trump and Cohen discussing acquiring the rights to McDougal's story and whether to pay by cash or check.

At issue is whether the payment the men are discussing was campaign-related and intended to influence the election, in which case it would likely be counted as a contribution, or whether it was merely meant to shield the married Trump from an embarrassing revelation harmful to his personal life. Also important is whether the payment to McDougal from the Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., was meant as a backdoor campaign contribution or was a legitimate media company expense.

"It's a piece of evidence. It's not a smoking gun," said Rick Hasen, a campaign finance law expert at the University of California, Irvine. "It's relevant to the investigation, and it's relevant to considering whether Trump or Cohen or AMI committed campaign finance violations, but on its own, it does not constitute proof of any violation."

He added, "It does not establish either a motive to spend illegal or unreported money in violation of the campaign finance laws, and it doesn't establish that any money was actually paid for this purpose."

Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani has said that the conversation wasn't campaign-related and that Trump and Cohen didn't make a payment to buy the rights.

The Justice Department has been investigating Cohen for months, raiding his home, office and hotel room in search of documents related to McDougal and a separate $130,000 payment the attorney facilitated before the election to Stormy Daniels, an adult-film actress who says she had sex with Trump in 2006. Cohen, long a loyal counselor to the president, has more recently signaled that he'd be open to cooperating with prosecutors.

His lawyer, Lanny Davis, released the recording to CNN in a reflection of open discord with Trump. Trump's lawyers responded by circulating a transcript of the call that challenged Davis' assessment of it.

Legal experts say the case raises murky issues, especially as investigators discern the motivations behind AMI's payment and the extent to which Cohen was involved in the arrangement.

Prosecutors could conclude that the Enquirer, which did not publish McDougal's story as part of a tabloid strategy known as "catch and kill," made the payment to aid Trump's election bid in violation of campaign finance regulations barring corporations from making campaign contributions. But there's an exemption for media companies engaged in legitimate media functions, which AMI could invoke by saying it was acting as a news organization and not a campaign supporter.

A key question will be whether the arrangements would have taken place even if Trump weren't a candidate. But election references in the recording, including discussion of polls and anxiety over the possible release of Trump's divorce records from first wife Ivana, may create circumstantial evidence that the campaign was a central focus.

"I think the election was certainly on everybody's mind, but that doesn't make anyone's acts an election contribution or expenditure," said Craig Engle, a campaign finance law expert and former general counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Daniel Petalas, former general counsel to the Federal Election Commission, said the recording could be valuable to prosecutors to the extent it reveals Trump's and Cohen's state of mind.

A former Justice Department prosecutor, Petalas said it was notable that Trump seemed concerned that divorce papers could soon be unsealed, suggesting sensitivity to not wanting embarrassing information out before the election.

He said even if the conversation alone doesn't establish wrongdoing, it could nonetheless be valuable to investigators reviewing the separate payment to Daniels as they examine a potential pattern to subvert campaign finance laws.

Lawyers for Trump and Cohen have made different representations about whether the recording shows Trump wanting to make the payment via cash or check. The Trump team's transcript says he said "don't pay cash" and wanted it done by check. Davis has disputed that.

But that distinction probably doesn't matter.

"The question comes down to whether or not there's a payment, by any means, that violated the amount and source requirements of the law," Petalas said. "Paying by check doesn't change anything."

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Trump Organization Finance Chief Called To Testify Before Federal Grand Jury

Longtime Trump executive Allen Weisselberg has been subpoenaed in Michael Cohen probe

By Rebecca Davis O'Brien, Rebecca Ballhaus, Michael Rothfeld And Alexandra Berzon

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Former Bernie Sanders Consultant Assisting Mueller Investigation

Tad Devine was one of a number of American consultants who assisted former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort on his work in Ukraine.

By Theodoric Meyer

Politico, July 26, 2018

Tad Devine, a veteran Democratic operative who worked as a senior adviser to Sen. Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, is assisting special counsel Robert

Mueller in his prosecution of Paul Manafort, according to Devine's consulting firm.

Long before Manafort became chairman of President Donald Trump's campaign, Devine was one of a number of American consultants who worked with Manafort in 2010 to help elect Viktor Yanukovych as president of Ukraine. Mueller has examined Manafort's work in Ukraine as part of his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Julian Mulvey, a partner at Devine's firm, Devine Mulvey Longabaugh, said in statement that Mueller had assured the firm that it has "no legal exposure and did not act unlawfully."

Devine stopped working for Yanukovych after his government's arrest of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Ukrainian prime minister and his political rival. Tymoshenko was later imprisoned by Yanukovych's government on what were widely condemned at the time as politically-motivated charges.

"After the administration of the presidential candidate we had worked for arrested his political opponent, we quit," Mulvey said in his statement. "We then declined additional offers to work on his later campaigns."

Documents filed in court by Manafort's lawyers on Thursday confirm that Devine declined to work with Manafort on the 2012 Ukrainian elections.

However, less than three months before the elections, Devine sent Manafort a memo with advice on how Yanukovych's party could get on "more favorable message terrain." The memo also indicates that Devine and Manafort had spoken recently.

"It was great to talk to you, and I hope we catch up in person soon," Devine wrote in the memo.

And after Yanukovych was forced from power and fled to Russia in 2014, Manafort again recruited Devine to help him build a new Ukrainian political party.

"My rate for something like this would be $10,000/day, including travel days," Devine wrote in a 2014 email to Manafort's deputy, Rick Gates. "So if you want me to leave the US on Monday 6/16 and return on Friday 6/20 that would be 5 days at $10G/day for $50,000.00. You would need to make the travel arrangements, and transfer the $50G before the trip."

Devine ended up making the trip, emails included in the documents filed by Manafort's lawyers show. Less than five months later, Devine signed on to work on Sanders' presidential campaign.

Stormy Daniels's Attorney Will Speak In Iowa, Fueling Speculation Of Possible Presidential Bid

By Elise Viebeck
Washington Post, July 26, 2018

The attorney for Stormy Daniels announced Thursday that he will speak next month at an annual Democratic dinner in northern Iowa and said he will attend party fundraisers in multiple states, stoking speculation about his presidential ambitions.

Michael Avenatti, who rose to prominence this year amid the legal fight between adult-film actress Daniels and President Trump, said on Twitter that he will be a speaker at the Iowa Democratic Wing Ding on Aug. 10 in Clear Lake, Iowa. The dinner is known for attracting White House candidates and those contemplating bids to a state that is considered one of the most important presidential proving grounds. Previous speakers include then-candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

"I look forward to speaking at the Iowa State Democratic Wing Ding next month. Extremely honored to be included as one of the speakers. It promises to be a great event as always!" Avenatti tweeted.

Reached by phone, Avenatti said he has been invited to speak at a "number of Democratic fundraisers" and plans to attend events in Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan. He said he has been asked to stump for Democratic candidates in the midterm elections but would not say which ones.

He said he has not decided whether to formally launch a 2020 presidential bid.

"If Mr. Trump is the opponent, and I still have serious questions as to whether he will be, the Democratic Party better be very careful in who they nominate to compete against him," Avenatti said. "The number one question that needs to be asked is: Can the candidate beat Donald Trump? Because you can have all the political experience in the world and the greatest policy ideas of the last 100 years, and if you can't beat Donald Trump, it doesn't mean anything."

I look forward to speaking at the Iowa State Democratic Wing Ding next month. Extremely honored to be included as one of the speakers. It promises to be a great event as always! #Basta #FightClub— Michael Avenatti (@MichaelAvenatti) July 26, 2018

Avenatti said on Twitter this month that he will run for president if Trump seeks reelection and if "there is no other candidate in the race that has a REAL chance at beating him."

"We can't relive 2016," Avenatti wrote July 4. "I love this country, our values and our people too much to sit by while they are destroyed."

Avenatti is representing Daniels, also known as Stephanie Clifford, in her lawsuit to void a nondisclosure agreement she signed in 2016 that prevented her from speaking about an alleged affair with Trump in exchange for $130,000. Daniels argues that the nondisclosure agreement is invalid because Trump, who denies the alleged affair, never signed it.

The sprawling legal battle has made Avenatti a kind of celebrity on Twitter and cable news. He will speak alongside Rep. John Delaney (D-Md.), who last year launched a campaign for president, and Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), who is seen as testing the waters for a possible White House bid.

Meadows Backs Off Impeaching Rosenstein After Leadership Talks

By Olivia Beavers

The Hill, July 26, 2018

Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) says he is tabling his efforts to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein after having several meetings with Republican leadership, stating that he would instead pursue contempt if the Justice Department (DOJ) does not turn over documents Congress is seeking.

While the impeachment option remains on the table, Meadows told reporters Thursday he now hopes it will be a contempt process rather than impeachment.

When asked what will happen if he does not receive the documents two House committees are seeking by the time the House returns from August recess, Meadows said, "I think the very first order of business would be moving the House to a contempt vote."

"I think it is our desire to have more of a contempt process, which obviously has to have a partner with the Speaker, and I think hopefully they will at least acknowledge we've made some reasonable concessions to give DOJ and FBI," Meadows told a scrum of reporters.

Meadows, the chairman of the House Freedom Caucus and fierce DOJ critic, said his decision to table impeachment comes after he had "very good, good conversations with the leadership team [and] with Chairman [of the Judiciary Committee Rep. Bob] Goodlatte [R-Va.] on a path forward."

This, he added, would be the DOJ's and FBI's "one last chance to comply."

"I hope we can avoid impeachment and hopefully avoid contempt and get the documents, but certainly both those things are on the table and remain on the table to have more of a contempt process," he added. "Both options remain there."

Meadows said pursuing contempt, if the DOJ does not cooperate, could "unite" leadership and some of the House Republicans who "have been more frustrated," rather than going for the more nuclear impeachment option.

Meadows Softens Push To Impeach Rosenstein After Talks With GOP Leadership

By Dan Boylan

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

A day after filing articles of impeachment against Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, House Freedom Caucus chair Mark Meadows appeared to soften his stance and said contempt charges could instead be pursued if the Department of Justice fails to provide Congress the documents it seeks related to Russian election meddling and Hillary Clinton's secret emails.

"I think the very first order of business would be moving the House to a contempt vote," the North Carolina Republican told Capitol Hill reporters when asked what would happen if the DOJ does not cooperate by the time Congress returns from its August recess. The House of Representatives is scheduled to start its recess late Thursday.

Earlier Thursday, House Speaker Paul D. Ryan criticized the impeachment effort Mr. Meadows and 10 co-sponsors had undertaken, saying it could even end up hurting the chances of confirming President Trump's Supreme Court nomination.

"I don't think this rises to the level of high crime or misdemeanor," Mr. Ryan said.

Mr. Ryan said those document requests are valid and must be answered — but he said targeting Mr. Rosenstein was not the answer.

Speaking later, Mr. Meadows explained his change of mind stemmed from "very good conversations with the leadership team [and] with Chairman Goodlatte [of the House Judiciary Committee], on a path forward."

Mr. Meadows, who along with House Intelligence Committee chairman, Rep. Devin Nunes, has harshly criticized the DOJ and FBI and engaged in a months-long battle over the documents.

Wednesday's impeachment articles, aimed at the man who supervises special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, marked a major escalation in that war.

Mr. Meadows said impeachment remained an option but added that the DOJ and FBI now had "one last chance" to comply.

"I think it is our desire to have more of a contempt process, which obviously has to have a partner with the Speaker and I think hopefully they will at least acknowledge we've made some reasonable concessions to give DOJ and FBI," he said.

In Boston, AG Sessions Backs Rod Rosenstein

By Maria Cramer

Boston Globe, July 26, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Thursday threw his support behind Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who was recently targeted by conservative Republicans in Congress who have moved to impeach him over his handling of the Russia investigation.

"Rod Rosenstein is highly capable. . . . I have the highest confidence in him,'' Sessions said in Boston, where

he participated in a news conference announcing a crackdown on undocumented immigrants collecting federal services.

A Republican and former US senator, Sessions urged the Republican-controlled Congress to turn its attention away from attacking Rosenstein and the Justice Department and instead pay attention to more significant national concerns.

He said lawmakers should be focused on closing loopholes in the country's immigration laws instead. "That's where I'd like their focus to be," Sessions said.

His comments came shortly before House Speaker Paul Ryan said at a news conference in Washington, D.C., that he does not support the effort to impeach Rosenstein. Related Links House Republicans move to impeach Rod Rosenstein

A group of 11 House Republicans has introduced articles of impeachment against Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who oversees special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

"I don't think we should be cavalier with this process or with this term," Ryan said.

Ryan made the comments a day after the group of House Republicans filed articles of impeachment against Rosenstein, following months of criticism aimed at the Justice Department — and the Russia investigation in particular — from President Trump and his GOP allies in Congress.

The five impeachment articles would charge Rosenstein with "high crimes and misdemeanors" for failing to produce information to congressional committees and signing off on what some Republicans say was improper surveillance of a Trump adviser.

Back in Boston on Thursday, Sessions also commented on a speech he gave Tuesday to conservative high school students, where he repeated the phrase "lock her up," a chant that Trump's supporters used during the 2016 campaign to call for jailing Democrat Hillary Clinton, who was running against the Republican Trump.

"I met with a group of enthusiastic high school students and they spontaneously broke [into chants]. Perhaps I should have taken a moment to remind them of the fact that people are presumed innocent until cases are made," he said.

Conservative hard-liners agreed to hold off on pushing for an impeachment vote on Thursday after securing a commitment from GOP leaders to punish Justice Department officials with a contempt of Congress if they do not deliver specified documents in the coming weeks.

The deal essentially puts off the showdown until after lawmakers return from a five-week recess set to begin after Thursday's votes. The lawmakers spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The 11 Republicans, led by Representatives Mark Meadows of North Carolina, and Jim Jordan of Ohio, filed their resolution to impeach Rosenstein late Wednesday in a direct attack on a Trump administration law enforcement official.

The Justice Department insists that it has cooperated with the demands from Congress. Officials have said that they have provided the vast majority of information sought in subpoenas from two key House committees — and are nearly done with providing all the outstanding information requested in those subpoenas.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, Republican of Louisiana, said earlier Thursday that he supports the effort by conservative lawmakers to impeach Rosenstein, calling it "leverage" to get the Justice Department to provide Congress with more documents related to the Russia probe.

Scalise, who is the third-ranking Republican in the House and is eyeing a bid to become speaker, said during an interview with Fox News that he would vote for the resolution if it reaches the floor.

"It's more about leverage to let the Justice Department know we're serious about getting the final information they haven't sent us," Scalise told The Washington Post.

"This is another tool to get Justice to comply with our subpoenas and our demands for documents that the American people deserve to get," he said. "They need to start complying. Obviously they have given us a number of things, but they've still held back some of the documents we need to get as part of our oversight."

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Republican of California, suggested slowing down the process, saying that the Justice Department should comply with documents requests but that the resolution should be dealt with in a committee first before being considered on the floor.

"People are discussing" how to handle the situation, McCarthy said. "What everybody's trying to do is get the information. I think what would make this resolution go away is to supply the information to the House."

Democrats have said that House Republicans' clashes with Rosenstein are little more than a pretext to weaken Mueller's efforts.

Some Republicans questioned the wisdom of the impeachment effort.

"Reckless publicity stunt," Representative Carlos Curbelo of Florida tweeted Wednesday night. "No different from Dems who filed articles of impeachment against the President some months ago. What a sad, pathetic game of 'how low can you go?' "

Meadows and Jordan are leaders of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, a bloc whose members have been among the most persistent critics of Rosenstein. All 11 lawmakers who filed the resolution are members.

In a joint statement Wednesday, the top Democrats on three House committees called the resolution a "direct attack" on the Mueller probe and warned President Donald Trump not to use it as a pretext to fire Rosenstein or Mueller.

"Any attempt to do so will be viewed by Congress and the American people as further proof of an effort to obstruct justice with severe consequences for Trump and his presidency," said Representatives Elijah E. Cummings of Maryland, Jerrold Nadler of New York, and Adam B. Schiff of California.Material from the Washington Post was used in this report. Maria Cramer can be reached at mcramer@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter @globemcramer.

Impeach Rosenstein? C'mon, Man

By The Editorial Board

New York Times, July 26, 2018

In its latest and futile gesture, the House Freedom Caucus sets its sights on ousting the man overseeing Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.

The editorial board represents the opinions of the board, its editor and the publisher. It is separate from the newsroom and the Op-Ed section.

While Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein is surely disheartened to have had five articles of impeachment filed against him by a clutch of congressional Republicans on Wednesday evening, he should not take the move personally.

Although Representatives Mark Meadows of North Carolina and Jim Jordan of Ohio, the current and former chairmen of the conservative House Freedom Caucus who are leading this crusade, are running around Washington loudly accusing Mr. Rosenstein of high crimes and misdemeanors, their public relations assault is not actually about his refusing to turn over this or that document related to the Russia investigation. It's not really even about the lawmakers' loathing of the broader investigation, though certainly President Trump's congressional lackeys — Mr. Meadows and Mr. Jordan most definitely included — are increasingly desperate to derail it.

For Freedom Caucus leaders, this impeachment resolution is about something at once much broader and far pettier: the need to make a huge, disruptive, polarizing political stink just as members head home for the long hot August recess. Especially with a critical midterm election coming, it never hurts to have some extra well-marbled meat to throw the voters. And it is unlikely a coincidence that, less than 24 hours after filing, Mr. Jordan — who, lest anyone forget, is multiply accused of overlooking rampant sexual abuse while an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University — formally announced his candidacy for House speaker.

Not to make Mr. Rosenstein feel any less special, but this is the fourth year in a row that Freedom Caucusers have pulled a summer-break stunt so nakedly self-serving that it would be comic if it weren't so odious in its quest to erode public faith in government and in democratic institutions more broadly. Indeed, for all those wondering how the Republican Party reached the point where Donald Trump could swallow it whole with his furious everything-is-awful-and-everyone-is-out-to-get-you brand of demagogy, look no further than the nihilists in the Freedom Caucus.

First, a brief recap of Meadows & Company's previous summer shenanigans: In 2015, Mr. Meadows became an overnight political celebrity when, on the day before break, he filed a motion aimed at overthrowing the House speaker, John Boehner. That effort eventually bore fruit.

The next two, not so much. In 2016, Freedom Caucus members filed a pre-break motion to force a vote on the impeachment of the Internal Revenue Service commissioner, John Koskinen. (Impeachment is all the rage with these guys.) And last summer, they filed a discharge petition demanding a vote on a repeal of Obamacare.

This year's push to impeach Mr. Rosenstein is about as likely to succeed as a campaign to make Roseanne Barr the next head of the N.A.A.C.P. Besides Mr. Jordan and Mr. Meadows, it has only nine co-sponsors, and Republican leaders, including Trey Gowdy, the chairman of the oversight committee, have expressed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the effort. Mr. Meadows didn't even attempt to file a "privileged motion," as he and his colleagues did against Mr. Koskinen two years ago, which would have forced a vote before members decamped on Thursday.

As such, the issue won't get taken up until lawmakers return from break in September, if then. (That's the beauty of pre-recess antics: They cannot fail before members get to spend several weeks touting them back home.) At that point, there will be only a handful of weeks remaining until Election Day. There is vanishingly little chance that House leadership will let this toxic nonsense advance — Speaker Paul Ryan already has publicly smacked down the effort — and zero chance that the motion could amass anywhere close to the two-thirdssupport required for the Senate to actually remove Mr. Rosenstein.

This stunt is in fact so ridiculous, so unfounded, so poisonous to the Republic that Attorney General Jeff Sessions felt compelled not only to publicly defend his deputy, but also to suggest that the lawmakers involved find a better use of their time. And Sally Yates, the former acting attorney general who was fired in January 2017 for refusing to defend President Trump's travel ban, tweeted a warning about the long-term damage of "using the Department of Justice as a prop for political theater."

Ms. Yates is right to be concerned. It's not that the Freedom Caucus members don't recognize the damage they're doing — or even that they don't care. It is that delegitimizing government is at the heart of their movement. These backbench bomb-throwers came to power on an explicit promise to stop President Barack Obama from achieving his goals and, as a bonus, to punish any Republican lawmaker showing even the slightest inclination

to cooperate with the opposition. Conflict and obstructionism have always been their purpose, fueled by their relentless message that government is always the problem, that all experts are idiots, that cultural and coastal elites hate Real Americans and that all of Washington is corrupt and broken beyond repair. Except themselves, of course.

As has often been noted, Mr. Trump did not invent the apocalyptic message that he has used to dazzle the Republican base. He merely distilled it to its essence. But the base had been groomed for his arrival for years, in no small part by lawmakers like Mr. Meadows and Mr. Jordan, who have repeatedly proved eager to tear down democratic institutions in the service of their own political aims.

So while the Freedom Caucus's pitiful effort to oust Mr. Rosenstein should not be taken seriously on practical grounds, it is a tragic reminder of the bleak path down which the Republican Party has been slouching in recent years. The rot was there long before Mr. Trump showed up to exploit it, and it is likely to remain long after he is gone.

Sessions Defends Rosenstein Amid House GOP Impeachment Push

By Morgan Chalfant

The Hill, July 26, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Sessions fiercely defended his deputy Rod Rosenstein on Thursday morning after a group of House conservatives introduced an impeachment resolution against him.

"My deputy, Rod Rosenstein, is highly capable," Sessions said at an event in Boston when asked to address the impeachment efforts. "I have the highest confidence in him. You probably know that not only did he go to the Wharton School of Business, but he graduated from Harvard right here in this area."

His comments came after a group of House conservatives led by Reps. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) on Wednesday night introduced articles of impeachment against Rosenstein, who is overseeing the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

The lawmakers have grown increasingly furious with the Justice Department for what they view as a failure to turn over documents requested by Congress related to the department's probes into Russia's election interference and Hillary Clinton's emails.

"The DOJ is keeping information from Congress. Enough is enough. It's time to hold Mr. Rosenstein accountable for blocking Congress's constitutional oversight role," Jordan said in a statement.

Sessions said Thursday that Congress would be better served to focus on working on passing immigration legislation.

"What I would like Congress to do is to focus on some of the legal challenges that are out there. We need Congress to deal with the immigration question," Sessions told reporters.

"There are loopholes in our laws that are being exploited. We need to get them focused and we are pleading with them to do so. Our job and our enforcement officers' jobs are far more difficult than they need to be. Commonsense legislation can make a big difference. That's where I would like to see them focus their time," Sessions said.

The articles filed Wednesday include a series of allegations against Rosenstein, such as accusing him of having a conflict of interest in special counsel Robert Mueller's probe. The lawmakers allege he is a "witness" in the investigation because he signed off on a renewal of an FBI application to conduct surveillance on former Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

Democrats have cast the effort as an effort to attack Mueller's investigation, which has frequently attracted ire from President Trump. Mueller's probe includes exploring whether there was collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow.

Sessions Defends Deputy After Impeachment Move

By Philip Marcelo

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

BOSTON (AP) — U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions defended his top deputy Thursday after a handful of congressional Republicans moved this week to impeach him.

Speaking in Boston, Sessions said he has the "highest confidence" in Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and described him as "highly capable" when asked about the impeachment effort.

A group of 11 House conservatives on Wednesday introduced articles of impeachment against Rosenstein, who oversees special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation because Sessions has recused himself.

Sessions, a former Republican Senator from Alabama, suggested lawmakers should instead focus on "legal challenges," such as reforming the nation's immigration system.

"There are loopholes on our laws that are being exploited," he said. "Our enforcement officers' jobs are far more difficult than they need to be. Common sense legislation can make a big difference. That's where I'd like to see them focus their efforts."

Sessions also expressed regret for having laughed at a "Lock Her Up" chant and repeated the words during a speech Tuesday at a high school leadership summit in D.C.

"I perhaps should have taken a moment to advise them on the fact that you're presumed innocent until cases are

made," he said when asked to comment on the chant, which is a staple of President Donald Trump's campaign rallies.

The chant refers to the FBI investigation of Democrat Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as Secretary of State under former President Barack Obama.

Sessions was in Boston federal court Thursday to join U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts Andrew Lelling and other federal authorities in announcing 25 arrests in a federal sweep meant to crack down on document and benefit fraud.

Thursday's arrests swept up mostly Dominican nationals living in the country illegally. Prosecutors say many stole the identities of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico in order to receive health care and other federal benefits in Massachusetts.

Sessions said the actions defrauded the federal government of about $250,000 and that many of the suspects had criminal records, including a convicted murderer who escaped from prison in Puerto Rico 24 years ago.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Ryan Says He Opposes Conservatives' Effort To Impeach Deputy AG Rod Rosenstein

By Mike Debonis And John Wagner

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan said Thursday that he opposes an effort by conservatives to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, as Republican leaders of the chamber sought to avert a vote on the volatile issue later in the day.

Ryan's comments came hours after 11 House Republicans introduced a resolution to impeach the No. 2 official at the Justice Department, who they have accused of withholding documents and being insufficiently transparent in his handling of the Russia probe led by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

Ryan (R-Wis.) said that it is important for the House to be able to conduct oversight of the Justice Department and that he sympathized with the frustration voiced by his colleagues. But Ryan said he had seen nothing that rises to the standard of impeachment.

"I don't think we should be cavalier," he told reporters. "I don't think this rises to 'high crimes and misdemeanors.' "

He also raised the specter of impeachment proceedings tying the House and Senate in knots, delaying other agenda items, potentially including the confirmation of Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

Conservative hard-liners earlier agreed to hold off on pushing for an impeachment vote Thursday after securing a commitment from GOP leaders to declare Justice Department officials in contempt of Congress if they do not deliver specified documents in the coming weeks.

The deal essentially puts off the showdown until after lawmakers return from a five-week recess set to begin after Thursday's votes.

The 11 Republicans, led by Reps. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), filed their resolution to impeach Rosenstein late Wednesday, making a direct attack on a Trump administration law enforcement official.

The Justice Department insists that it has cooperated with the demands from Congress. Officials have said that they have provided the vast majority of information sought in subpoenas from two key House committees and are nearly done with providing all the outstanding information requested in those subpoenas.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) said earlier Thursday that he supports the effort by conservative lawmakers to impeach Rosenstein, calling it "leverage" to get the Justice Department to provide Congress with more documents related to the Russia probe.

Scalise, who is the third-ranking Republican in the House and is eyeing a bid to become speaker, said during an interview with Fox News that he would vote for the resolution if it reached the floor.

"It's more about leverage to let the Justice Department know we're serious about getting the final information they haven't sent us," Scalise told The Washington Post.

"This is another tool to get Justice to comply with our subpoenas and our demands for documents that the American people deserve to get," he said. "They need to start complying. Obviously they have given us a number of things, but they've still held back some of the documents we need to get as part of our oversight."

Separately, Scalise told reporters he is "very disappointed" in the Justice Department.

"They need to be transparent to the American people," he said. "We've given them a lot of time, and it's time for them to take this serious, to turn over the remaining documents and stop stonewalling and stop trying to hide the facts from the American people."

[House conservatives introduce resolution calling for impeachment of Rod Rosenstein]

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) suggested slowing down the process, saying that the Justice Department should comply with documents requests but that the resolution should be dealt with in a committee first before being considered on the floor.

"People are discussing" how to handle the situation, McCarthy said. "What everybody's trying to do is get the information. I think what would make this resolution go away is to supply the information to the House."

Democrats have said that House Republicans' clashes with Rosenstein are little more than a pretext to weaken Mueller's efforts.

Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.) said Thursday that the push to get more documents "really has nothing to do with oversight."

"This has everything to do ... with getting the documents to the president's allies in Congress so (Trump lawyer Rudolph W.) Giuliani can get his hands on them," Schiff said.

He said his Republican colleagues were also trying to give Trump "a pretext" to fire Rosenstein "so he can replace him with someone who will simply do his bidding."

Some Republicans also questioned the wisdom of the impeachment effort.

"Reckless publicity stunt," Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.) tweeted Wednesday night. "No different from Dems who filed articles of impeachment against the President some months ago. What a sad, pathetic game of 'how low can you go?' "

Meanwhile, Attorney General Jeff Sessions expressed confidence in Rosenstein when asked about the impeachment effort during a news conference in Boston on Thursday.

"My deputy, Rod Rosenstein, is highly capable," Sessions said. "I have the highest confidence in him."

Meadows and Jordan are leaders of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, a bloc whose members have been among the most persistent critics of Rosenstein. All 11 lawmakers who filed the resolution are members.

In a joint statement Wednesday, the top Democrats on three House committees called the resolution a "direct attack" on the Mueller probe and warned President Trump not to use it as a pretext to fire Rosenstein or Mueller.

"Any attempt to do so will be viewed by Congress and the American people as further proof of an effort to obstruct justice with severe consequences for Trump and his presidency," said Reps. Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.).

Meadows and Jordan filed the resolution Wednesday, a little more than an hour after leaving a meeting with top Justice Department officials, including FBI general counsel Dana Boente and Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz. Leaving the meeting, Meadows said there was "still great frustration" with the pace at which subpoenaed documents had been produced to Congress.

But that was far from a unanimous opinion for the lawmakers who participated. House Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) said that he believed Justice Department officials were making progress toward complying with the subpoena and that impeaching Rosenstein would be a bad idea.

"I'm not a big fan of drama," Gowdy said. "Impeachment is a punishment; it's not a remedy. If you're looking for documents, then you want compliance and you want whatever moves you toward compliance."

House Speaker Rejects Rosenstein Impeachment Effort

By Daphne Psaledakis And Nate Raymond

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Paul Ryan Dismisses Impeachment Push For Rod Rosenstein

By Stephen Dinan

Washington Times, July 26, 2018

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan threw cold water Thursday on the new effort to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, saying the move could even end up hurting the chances of confirming President Trump's Supreme Court nomination.

A group of conservatives introduced articles of impeachment against Mr. Rosenstein earlier this week, saying he should be removed from office because he's stonewalled Congress' efforts to get documents lawmakers are seeking into how the Justice Department conducted its probes into Hillary Clinton's emails and Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Mr. Ryan said those document requests are valid and must be answered — but he said targeting Mr. Rosenstein was not the answer.

"I don't think this rises to the level of high crime or misdemeanor," Mr. Ryan said.

He cautioned fellow lawmakers not to be "cavalier" with impeachment.

Mr. Ryan also warned conservatives against derailing their own agenda.

He said if the House were to impeach Mr. Rosenstein, it would force the Senate to quickly take up the matter, bringing most other business to a halt. Mr. Ryan said that could hinder the push to have Judge Brett Kavanaugh confirmed to the Supreme Court by October.

From the political left, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi also blasted the impeachment effort, saying it was really an effort to try to undercut the ongoing special counsel's probe into Russian election meddling and possible wrongdoing by President Trump.

Mrs. Pelosi also suggested the move was a way for Rep. Jim Jordan, an Ohio Republican, to distract from accusations from his past.

Mr. Jordan has been accused of turning a blind eye to sexual abuse of Ohio State University wrestlers during his time as an assistant coach.

Mr. Jordan is one of the leaders of the impeachment effort, and on Thursday also announced a run for the speaker's post next year. Mr. Ryan is stepping down from Congress.

Ryan Opposes Rosenstein Impeachment Try, Likely Dooming It

By Mary Clare Jalonick And Chad Day

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

House Speaker Paul Ryan said Thursday he doesn't support an effort by a small group of conservatives to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, likely dooming the endeavor and easing a months-long standoff between House Republicans and the Justice Department.

Ryan said the tussle over document requests between congressional Republicans and Rosenstein, who oversees the federal Trump-Russia investigation, doesn't rise to the level of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that could warrant impeachment under the Constitution.

"I don't think we should be cavalier with this process or with this term," Ryan said. He also said he is encouraged by progress on the document production.

Ryan made the comments a day after the group of 11 House Republicans sharply escalated the extended clash with the Justice Department by filing articles of impeachment against Rosenstein, who oversees special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

Their move late Wednesday came after months of criticism aimed at the department — and the Russia investigation in particular — from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies in Congress. Trump has fumed about Mueller's probe and has repeatedly called it a "witch hunt," a refrain echoed by some of the lawmakers.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is defending his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, against congressional Republicans who moved to impeach him. Rosenstein oversees the federal probe of Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Mueller is investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election and whether Trump's campaign was involved.

The impeachment effort is led by North Carolina Rep. Mark Meadows, the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus who talks to Trump frequently and often defends him to colleagues.

After Ryan voiced his disapproval, Meadows acknowledged that he didn't currently have the votes to pass the impeachment resolution. The House left Thursday afternoon for a five-week recess.

Instead, Meadows said he had discussed a plan with Judiciary Committee Chairman Robert Goodlatte and the No. 3 House GOP leader, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, to vote Rosenstein in contempt of Congress if the department has not produced certain documents by the time the House returns in September.

Meadows said that would give the department "one last chance" before lawmakers moved to hold Rosenstein in contempt or impeach him.

Ryan's tone was far different.

"We do not have full compliance, and we have to get full compliance, but we have been making tremendous progress to that point," he said.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Jeff Sessions defended Rosenstein in a speech in Boston, saying he has the "highest confidence" in his top deputy. Rosenstein has overseen the Russia investigation since last year, when Sessions recused himself from the probe following reports of his own meeting with the Russian ambassador.

Asked in May about rumblings that House Republicans might move to impeachment, Rosenstein was defiant.

"I think they should understand by now, the Department of Justice is not going to be extorted," he said.

Meadows, Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan and the other Republicans who introduced the resolution have criticized Rosenstein and Justice Department officials as not being responsive enough as House committees have requested documents related to the beginning of the Russia investigation and a now-closed investigation into Democrat Hillary Clinton's emails.

The five articles would charge Rosenstein with failing to produce information to the committees, though the department has provided lawmakers with more than 800,000 documents. The resolution notes that Rosenstein was one of several department officials who approved what some Republicans say was improper surveillance of Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The impeachment resolution also criticizes Rosenstein for refusing to produce a memo that outlines the scope of the investigation and questions whether the investigation was started on legitimate grounds.

It is highly unusual, if not unprecedented, for lawmakers to demand documents that are part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

At a House hearing last month, Rosenstein, along with FBI Director Christopher Wray, faced angry Republicans who alleged bias at the FBI and suggested the department has conspired against Trump. Still, some GOP lawmakers said they would draw the line at impeachment.

"Impeachment is a punishment; it's not a remedy," said House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Trey Gowdy, who has led one of several House GOP investigations into the department and has complained of anti-Trump bias. "If you are looking for documents, then you want compliance, and you want whatever moves you toward compliance."

The impeachment resolution came about two hours after Meadows, Gowdy, Goodlatte and other GOP lawmakers met with Justice Department officials about the documents. The department has created new search systems, set up classified reading rooms and tasked dozens of employees to produce the hundreds of thousands of documents that Republican lawmakers have requested over the past year.

Democrats on the House Judiciary, Oversight and Government Reform and intelligence committees called the impeachment effort a "panicked and dangerous attempt to undermine an ongoing criminal investigation in an effort to protect President Trump as the walls are closing in around him and his associates."

So far, the special counsel has charged 32 people and three companies. That includes four Trump campaign advisers and 12 Russian intelligence officers.

Democratic Reps. Jerrold Nadler of New York, Elijah Cummings of Maryland and Adam Schiff of California said Rosenstein "stands as one of the few restraints against the overreaches of the president and his allies in Congress."

In addition to Meadows and Jordan, the Republican lawmakers who sponsored the impeachment articles are Reps. Jody Hice of Georgia, Jeff Duncan of South Carolina, Andy Biggs of Arizona, Louie Gohmert of Texas, Matt Gaetz of Florida, Scott DesJarlais of Tennessee, Paul Gosar of Arizona, Bill Posey of Florida and Scott Perry of Pennsylvania.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Paul Ryan Opposes Impeaching Rod Rosenstein

By Susan Ferrechio

Washington Examiner, July 26, 2018

House Speaker Paul Ryan said Thursday he isn't supporting a resolution put forward by a group of conservative lawmakers to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein because his actions don't merit it.

Ryan, R-Wis., cited several reasons for disagreeing with the measure, which Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., and ten others introduced Wednesday night.

"Do I support the impeachment of Rod Rosenstein? No I do not," Ryan told reporters. "I don't think we should be cavalier with this process. I don't think this rises to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors."

Meadows and others are at odds with Rosenstein over documents Congress is seeking relating to the Department of Justice probes into Hillary Clinton's private email server as well as the investigation into alleged Russian collusion with the Trump campaign. Rosenstein is overseeing special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.

Ryan partly disagrees with Meadows, who has argued the DOJ is not complying adequately with document requests.

"We've gotten a great deal of compliance on the documents but we do not have full compliance," Ryan said. "And we do expect to get that."

Ryan said under the rules governing the impeachment process, if the House were to approve of the resolution, it would sideline the GOP agenda by requiring the Senate to then act on the resolution.

"If we were to pass it in the House then what it would do is tie the Senate into knots," Ryan said. "It would derail or largely delay our agenda."

Ryan said appropriations and infrastructure legislation and even the timely confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh would be jeopardized.

Conservatives who introduced the resolution "know how I feel about this," Ryan said.

After today, the House will not be in a formal business session until Sept. 4. Lawmakers left town without voting on the resolution.

During a Fox News interview Wednesday evening, Meadows threatened to go around Ryan to impeach Rosenstein, pointing to the possible use of a privileged motion.

Ryan Rejects Conservative Push To Impeach Rosenstein

But the speaker may support charging the deputy attorney general with contempt of Congress if a key committee moves against him.

By Kyle Cheney And Rachael Bade

Politico, July 26, 2018

Speaker Paul Ryan on Thursday firmly rejected an effort by House conservatives to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, putting him at odds with hard-liners in his party and even some in his own leadership team.

But it's unclear how long he can keep them at bay.

Just minutes after the Wisconsin Republican told reporters that he did not think Rosenstein's actions merited his removal from office, House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows said Ryan had agreed to a different deal: Conservatives would give the Justice Department "one last chance" in August to turn over a range of documents that lawmakers subpoenaed in March or else Rosenstein could face charges of contempt of Congress.

"The speaker is willing to support [House Judiciary Committee] Chairman [Bob] Goodlatte in a contempt process if the agreed upon documents are not delivered," said Meadows, a top ally of President Donald Trump.

Moving forward with contempt proceedings would escalate the clash between Congress and DOJ and

potentially become a court battle over Capitol Hill's access to Executive Branch documents.

The agreement, negotiated on the House floor Thursday morning, highlights how Ryan has attempted to balance the aggressive demands of Trump allies without undermining the ongoing investigations of the Justice Department or Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election including potential collusion with the Trump campaign.

Meadows and Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), top House conservatives, introduced articles of impeachment late Wednesday that accused Rosenstein of obstructing their demands to access sensitive documents connected to Mueller's investigation and other FBI records.

But Ryan told reporters Thursday that the Department of Justice was largely complying with demands for documents that were the subject of two subpoenas earlier this year.

The internal GOP dispute over how to approach the Justice Department has been ongoing for weeks but is now dividing the party publicly. Many Republicans told POLITICO they were uncomfortable with the impeachment effort.

"Reckless publicity stunt," said Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.). "No different from Dems who filed articles of impeachment against the President some months ago. What a sad, pathetic game of 'How low can you go?'"

In his press conference Thursday, Ryan smacked down the impeachment effort more forcefully than either of this top lieutenants — Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Majority Whip Steve Scalise, who are considered contenders to succeed Ryan.

"I don't think we should be cavalier with this process or this term," he said of impeachment. "I don't think this rises to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors."

Ryan also cited a legislative reason for holding off: he worries it will upend the GOP's entire Hill agenda by tying "the Senate into knots."

Impeachment in the Senate is "about as privileged as anything gets over there," he said, and would clog up the legislative process should senators demand action on the matter right away — even if the effort would certainly fall flat. A two-thirds vote is required in the Senate to remove executive branch officials.

"It would derail or delay a big part of our agenda, our appropriations bills, our infrastructure bills… the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to go to the Supreme Court," Ryan said.

Ryan's comments put him at odds with Scalise, who expressed support for the idea in a Fox News interview earlier in the day. McCarthy, for his part, repeatedly refused to support or oppose impeachment when asked by reporters at the Capitol.

Away from the Capitol, Rosenstein found support Thursday from his boss, Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

"My deputy, Rod Rosenstein, is highly capable. I have the highest confidence in him," Sessions said during a press conference in Boston.

Other rank-and-file lawmakers went further, blasting their conservative colleagues and describing the impeachment push as a cynical ploy to gin up conservative voters or to goad President Donald Trump into firing Rosenstein and exerting more control over the Mueller probe.

"It's a show," said Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho). "I think they think it will please the president, they think it'll please the base. I would hate to think that it is a precursor to saying to the president 'Go ahead and fire him.'"

Meadows and Jordan on Wednesday passed up an opportunity to force a quick vote on impeachment by opting against pursuing a "privileged" resolution, a procedural tactic that allows members to demand a vote within two legislative days.

But as House lawmakers prepared to depart for a five-week recess, conservatives threatened to refile using the expedited procedure. That's when Meadows, Jordan and other conservative allies huddled on the floor with Scalise, Goodlatte and Ryan's legal counsel to find a way forward.

Under the agreement, according to Meadows, the documents he and his allies will demand cover records being reviewed by Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz, who's reviewing the origins of the FBI's probe of Russian contacts with the Trump campaign in 2016. Meadows said the list of requested documents would be compiled later today and would be limited to files that had already been demanded in the earlier subpoena.

Additional requests — like conservatives' demand to see Rosenstein's August 2017 memo detailing the scope of Mueller's probe — wouldn't be factored into the decision to move forward on contempt. Meadows added that he had no contact with the president on this matter.

Justice Department officials have emphasized that they've mounted a historically aggressive effort to share hundreds of thousands of pages of documents with Congress. They've built out two rooms at Justice Department headquarters where lawmakers and aides visit daily to negotiate access to files and possible redactions.

The department also built a software tool to comb through its database of top secret records in order to provide responses to congressional demands. Officials indicated that they're focused primarily on requests that come directly from committee chairmen like Goodlatte and House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, unlike lawmakers like Meadows — who isn't on either of those committees.

But Meadows noted he still has impeachment as an option in his arsenal and hasn't taken it off the table if his demands aren't met by September.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, House Leadership Defend Rod Rosenstein Against Impeachment Threat

By Kevin Johnson And Erin Kelly

USA Today, July 26, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Sessions and House leaders rushed to the defense of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein Thursday, after a coalition of conservative lawmakers launched an impeachment effort against the Justice Department official.

During an appearance in Boston, Sessions said Rosenstein had his "highest confidence" and referred to to his top deputy as "highly capable."

Perhaps the most important show of support, however, came from House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisc., and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who rejected the impeachment effort that Pelosi characterized as a thinly-veiled move to derail Russia special counsel Robert Mueller's ongoing inquiry, which Rosenstein oversees.

The rare alliance of Ryan and Pelosi means that the impeachment measure has little chance of advancing. And House members are scheduled to adjourn Thursday for a five-week recess.

"The attack on Rosenstein, of course, is an attack on the Mueller investigation," Pelosi said. "Just when you think you've seen it all, Republicans have no shame...What they're making is a statement: 'President Trump is above the law.' If they bring it up (for a vote), they have a price to pay for going that route."

Said Ryan: "Do I support impeachment of Rod Rosenstein? No, I do not… I don't think that this rises to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors."

Members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus escalated their battle against Rosenstein on Wednesday, filing articles of impeachment against the deputy attorney general who they accuse of stalling the handing over of documents to Congress related to the Russia investigation.

Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina, chairman of the Freedom Caucus, asserted that Rosenstein had "made every effort to obstruct legitimate attempts of congressional oversight."

Meadows filed the articles of impeachment along with Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, and nine other conservatives.

The Department of Justice has already handed over about 880,000 documents to Congress, but Meadows and his conservative allies are seeking more.

Steve Scalise Supports Impeachment Of Rod Rosenstein: 'Has Not Done His Job'

By Nick Givas

Daily Caller, July 26, 2018

Republican Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana threw his support behind the GOP effort to impeach Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on Fox News Thursday.

Scalise praised the efforts of Republican Reps. Devin Nunes of California, Jim Jordan of Ohio and Mark Meadows of North Carolina for trying to uncover intelligence abuses and urged Congress to do whatever is necessary to find the truth — including impeaching Rosenstein. (RELATED: GOP Rep. Steve Scalise Says He Won't Run Against Kevin McCarthy For Speaker Of The House)

"If you look at what Mark Meadows and Jim Jordan and Devin Nunes have been doing, they've been fighting to get more information from the Justice Department," Scalise said on "America's Newsroom." "Frankly, it is mind-boggling that Justice won't comply. They ought to want to work with us to root out the bad apples, and if putting impeachment on the table as one more tool gets them to finally comply with the subpoenas from Congress, we need to make sure that they do their job and they comply and they show the American people exactly what's going on."

"People want to know. What is going to root out the bad apples at the FBI? What are they doing to hold people accountable for what happened in this investigation that we've exposed?" he continued. "Let's get that information. All they need to do is turn over the documents and everything will be fine."

Scalise said he would vote to impeach Rosenstein because he failed to do his job as deputy attorney general and refused to comply with Congress after repeated reasonable requests.

"I would [vote to impeach]. Right now Rosenstein has not done his job in complying with Congress," Scalise concluded.

"What we're saying is 'here is a tool that Congress still has. Go do your job and comply so we don't have to get to this.' It's all up to him. If Rosenstein wants to comply and turn over the documents, we won't have this conversation. But if he's not going to do the job he's required to do and comply with the subpoenas from Congress, there are other tools that we have two use."

Nunes: Redacted Sections Of Carter Page FISAs Are 'Really Bad' For FBI

By Chuck Ross

Daily Caller, July 26, 2018

The release of heavily redacted versions of the FBI's applications for surveillance warrants against former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page has generated speculation about what's behind the black boxes that cover up a significant portion of the government documents.

But House Intelligence Committee chairman Devin Nunes claimed in an interview that aired Thursday that what's

behind the redactions is "really bad" in terms of showing the FBI relied on flimsy evidence to obtain the spy warrants on Page.

"What's in the redactions is equally bad, some would probably say worse than what the American people can see today," Nunes said in an interview with Hill.TV's Buck Sexton.

"I would argue that what's left in there is really bad, if not worse, but also what's not in there is even worse than what people can see, what people can't see."

The Department of Justice on Friday released heavily redacted versions of four applications the FBI submitted under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in order to obtain warrants to spy on Page, an energy consultant who joined the Trump campaign in March 2016. (RELATED: DOJ Releases Carter Page FISAs)

The unredacted sections of the applications showed the FBI relied on the unverified Steele dossier to make the case that there was probable cause to believe Page was acting as a foreign agent of Russia. The documents have touched off an intense partisan debate over whether the FBI misled surveillance court judges by relying on the dossier, which was funded by the Clinton campaign and DNC.

Page has vehemently denied the allegations in the dossier. In the 35-page document, former British spy Christopher Steele alleged Page met secretly with two sanctioned Kremlin insiders during a trip to Moscow in July 2016. He also alleged that Page was the Trump campaign's contact to the Kremlin for an alleged collusion conspiracy.

The FISA applications sought against Page also relied on a Sept. 23, 2016, Yahoo! News article that was based heavily on Steele's allegations. But the applications showed that the FBI did not disclose that Steele was a source for the article. The FBI erroneously stated that investigators did not believe that Steele was a source for the article.

Democrats have pushed back against Nunes and other Republicans, arguing the unredacted information met the probable cause standard required for FISA warrants. Some pundits also argued the redacted portions of the FISA applications likely included additional information that supported the FBI's case that Page was acting as a clandestine agent of the Kremlin.

A few Republicans have disputed Nunes's characterization of the FISA applications. Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Richard Burr said on Tuesday that the FISA court's decisions to grant the warrants were "sound."

Whether or not the FBI's applications rose to the probable cause standard, there are indications that House Intel Republicans believe that the remaining redacted portions of the FISA applications will reflect poorly on the FBI.

GOP members of the committee asked President Donald Trump on June 14 to declassify and release 21 pages from the fourth and final FISA application. The bulk of the pages fall under a section of the application with the sub-heading: "Page's Coordination with Russian Government Officials on 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Influence Activities." (RELATED: House Intel Republicans Want To Declassify These 21 Pages From The Carter Page FISAs)

Nunes came under heavy criticism Wednesday after it was revealed he was not one of the 31 lawmakers who have reviewed less-redacted versions of the Page FISA applications. Nineteen members of the House Intelligence Committee have seen the documents.

But a committee source says Nunes and all other Republicans on the panel know what information is in the applications.

"Every Republican on the Intelligence Committee knows exactly what's in the FISA warrant, which is why Members are united in requesting further declassification of it," the source told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

Top Iranian General Warns Trump That War Would Unravel U.S. Power In Region

By Erin Cunningham And Kareem Fahim

Washington Post, July 26, 2018

ISTANBUL — The powerful commander of Iran's special forces warned the United States on Thursday to halt threats of military action against Tehran, raising the stakes in an already fiery exchange between U.S. and Iranian leaders this week.

The combative message from Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, chief of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds force, also suggested that Iran's leadership is willing to stoke tensions with the Trump administration as part of Tehran's efforts to project wider regional clout.

Soleimani said President Trump would regret waging a war that would "destroy all that he owns" — an apparent reference to U.S. influence in the region.

"You may begin the war, but it will be us who will end it," Soleimani said in a speech in the central city of Hamedan, Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported.

He also said that the Red Sea, a critical waterway linking the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean basin, was "no longer secure" with U.S. military assets stationed in the area.

Iran has often denounced the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, including the Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain. But Soleimani's reference to the Red Sea reflects an expanded regional reach for what Iran considers within its military sphere.

Soleimani — a shadowy commander who has waged proxy wars in Iraq and Syria, including against U.S. troops — stopped short of issuing concrete threats against U.S. forces.

But his remarks came just one day after Saudi Arabia announced it was suspending oil shipments in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Gulf of Aden to the Red

Sea, because of what authorities said was a missile attack on two Saudi oil tankers by Iranian-allied rebels in Yemen.

The rebels claimed the attack on the Saudi oil tankers in the strait, but said the movement had targeted a Saudi warship called the Dammam, according to an article on the website of the rebel-run al-Masirah news channel.

The war in Yemen has been a theater for spiking tensions between Iran and the United States. The Trump administration and its ally Saudi Arabia have accused Iran of providing weapons, including ballistic missiles, and other support to the Houthis, a rebel group that seized control of Yemen's capital four years ago.

But the hostile words from one of Iran's most influential generals suggest heightened tensions and come amid a particularly sharp escalation in rhetoric on both sides.

This week, Trump and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani traded barbs that culminated in Trump firing off a tweetthreatening Iran with "CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE."

The Iranian commander "knows he has a range of indirect options to needle U.S. interests across the region," Tobias Schneider, a Middle East analyst at the Berlin-based Global Public Policy Institute, wrote Thursday on Twitter.

Soleimani's options, he said, include threatening U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, stepping up missile attacks on Saudi cities and disrupting regional shipping lanes.

Iranian military officials have suggested recently that they could block the Strait of Hormuz, a choke point for a third of the world's oil shipments, should U.S. sanctions prevent Iran from exporting its own oil.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have also previously threatened to block the Bab al-Mandeb Strait in retaliation for Saudi-led military offensives.

One of the ships "sustained minimal damage," Aramco, the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, said in a statement.

The Saudi Energy Ministry said Thursday that the country was temporarily halting the shipments "until the situation becomes clearer" and maritime transit "is safe," according to a statement from the Saudi-led military coalition operating in Yemen.

Iran's Special Forces Chief Warns Trump: "If You Begin The War, We Will End It" – Tasnim

By Parisa Hafezi

Reuters, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

After Trump's Threat To Iran, White House Convenes A Policy Meeting

High-level gathering is just the third called by John Bolton since he became national security adviser

By Michael R. Gordon, Nancy A. Youssef And Peter Nicholas

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Senators Warn Europe Against Flouting US Iran Sanctions

By Matthew Lee

Associated Press, July 26, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of Republican senators on Thursday warned European nations not to try to flout U.S. sanctions on Iran that will soon be re-imposed after President Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark nuclear accord.

The 10 senators, all of whom opposed the 2015 agreement, said in a letter to the ambassadors of Britain, France and Germany that they would be "particularly troubled" by any efforts to evade or undermine the sanctions. They said attempts to do so could be met by congressional action. A first set of U.S. sanctions lifted by the Obama administration under the terms of the nuclear deal is to be restored on Aug. 4. A second set will be re-imposed on Nov. 4.

The senators, including outspoken Iran deal critics Ted Cruz of Texas, Marco Rubio of Florida and Tom Cotton of Arkansas, noted that the sanctions are matters of U.S. law and had been eased only because the previous administration had approved of the deal, which Trump pulled out of in May.

"We write to urge you to comply with all American sanctions but also to emphasize we would find it particularly troubling if you sought to evade or undermine American statutes," the senators wrote. "These laws were passed by Congress, signed by President Obama and will be enforced by President Trump."

"Any attempt to evade or subvert them could well prompt congressional action, in coordination with other elements of the U.S. government, to ensure their integrity," they said.

Britain, France and Germany — along with China, Russia, the European Union and Iran itself — were the other parties to the nuclear deal that was one of former President Barack Obama's signature foreign policy achievements. Trump campaigned against the agreement, which he has called the worst deal ever negotiated by the United States, and followed through on that pledge to the anger of the other parties who remain in it.

Some European officials, who believe the deal is vital for the security of the continent, have suggested trying to

work around the re-imposed U.S. sanctions to preserve the deal. Those sanctions would penalize foreign governments or firms, including financial institutions, that do business with Iran.

Copyright 2018 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.